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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: A THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION

by

© VINCENT F. SACCO

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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ABSTRACT

This research examines a number of issues relating to the study of public perceptions of crime. The following questions are addressed: (1) What conceptual meaning may be attributed to public perceptions of crime? (2) How do the characteristics of social actors and the characteristics of the environments within which they reside affect the distribution of perception? (3) What types of behavioural consequences flow from perceptions of crime? (4) What implications does the study of public perceptions of crime have for the criminological theory? (5) What implications do the study of such perceptions have for the formation of public policy?

With respect to the conceptual question, the study of public perceptions of crime is placed within the more general context of perception in criminology. Although a typology of public perception is suggested, the argument is made that perceptions of crime are diffuse and many-sided phenomena which express a more general community malaise.

Employing data collected from a seven city sample of Alberta residents, an attempt is made to empirically assess the relative importance of various factors which might be thought to affect the differential distribution of perceptions of crime. With respect to social actor characteristics, the data suggest that the variables sex and resentment of social change are of particular predictive importance.

The hypothesis that the attributes of social actors interact with the city of residence to produce differentials in perception is generally unsupported. However, city of residence does appear to have predictive power independent of the characteristics of the people who inhabit the city. A contextual analysis indicates that both the rate of crime within the city and the population size are important variables. The influence exerted by city and city-related variables upon perceptions of crime is theoretically interpreted in terms of the effects of criminal environments.

The analysis relating to the consequences which flow from differential perceptions of crime focuses upon the effects which such perceptions have for three types of dependent variables--community affect, interpersonal trust and defensive behaviour. The effects of perception upon these variables are small but in many cases significant. The argument that such effects are likely only within certain urban environments is largely unsupported.

With respect to the implications which the study of public perceptions of crime has for criminological theory, the argument is made that it is erroneous to conceptualize the study of perception as a narrowly defined subarea of criminology. Rather it is argued that the attempt be made to understand the relationships which such perceptions have to a whole range of central criminological questions.

In terms of policy implications, it is suggested that the pragmatic role of the study of perception may be understood with reference to the framework known as social indicators research. Thus, if perceptions of crime can be conceptualized as general measures of concern for community, they may serve as indicators of the perceived quality of life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Introduction 5

Perception and Criminology 6

The Public Nature of Perception 10

The Nature of Public Perceptions of Crime . 12

3 THE DETERMINANTS OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: SOCIAL STATUS DIMENSIONS

Introduction 17

Previous Research 18

Primary and Secondary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime 35

Primary Status Characteristics 36

Secondary Status Characteristics 44

Summary 50

4 THE DETERMINANTS OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: COMMUNITY DIMENSIONS

Introduction 54

Public Perceptions of Crime and Social Context 55

Summary and Conclusions 80

CHAPTER PAGE

5 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AS PRODUCERS OF EFFECTS

Introduction 85

Public Perceptions of Crime and the Effects of Crime 85

Public Perceptions of Crime and the Question of Effects: The Present Research 97

Summary and Conclusions 100

6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction 101

Research Hypotheses: The Determinants of Perception 101

Research Hypotheses: The Consequences of Perceptions of Crime 104

7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction 106

Sample Selection 106

Interviewing 108

Measures 111

Methods of Analysis 112

Summary 115

8 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: AN ANALYSIS OF INDICATORS AND DIMENSIONS

Introduction 117

The Subjective Probability of Victimization. 117

Fear of Crime 120

Concern with Crime 122

CHAPTER PAGE

The Subjective Probability of Victimization: The Intercorrelation of Indicators 122

Fear of Crime: The Intercorrelation of Indicators 123

Fear of Crime and Subjective Probability of Victimization 124

Fear of Crime, Subjective Probability of Victimization and Concern with Crime 125

Summary and Conclusion 127

9 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND STATUS CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction 131

Primary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime 131

Primary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime: Summary 140

Secondary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime 143

Secondary Status Characteristics: Variations in Effects Across Cities 153

Social Actor Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime: Summary and Conclusion 156

10 PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND THE CITY ENVIRONMENT

Introduction 163

Perceptions of Crime and the City: Preliminary Data 163

Perceptions of Crime and the City: Dummy Variable Analysis 170

Perceptions of Crime and the City: Contextual Analysis 171

Summary and Conclusion 177

CHAPTER PAGE

11 PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND THEIR EFFECTS

Introduction 182

Defensive Behaviour 183

Interpersonal Trust 187

Community Affect 189

Across City Comparisons: Community Dimensions and the Effects of Perception . . . 198

Summary and Conclusions 202

12 FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS I: THE THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME

Introduction 205

The Definition of Crime 205

The Etiology of Crime 211

The Effects of Crime 217

Conclusions 219

13 FUTURE CONSIDERATION II: THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME

Introduction 220

Perceptions of Crime as Social Indicators . . 220

Perceptions of Crime and Social Policy 225

Summary and Conclusions 230

14 THE THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL NATURE OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Introduction 231

Conceptual Issues in the Study of Public Perceptions of Crime 231

CHAPTER PAGE

Perceptions of Crime as Dependent Variables 233

Perceptions of Crime as Independent Variables 241

The Wider Implications of The Study of Public Perceptions of Crime 244

In Conclusion 246

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BIBLIOGRAPHY 249

APPENDIX A. SAMPLING IN ALBERTA CITIES FOR MASS MEDIA CRIME PREVENTION EVALUATION 271

APPENDIX B. CRIME PREVENTION - SOLICITOR GENERAL OF CANADA POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY, JANUARY, 1979 272

APPENDIX C. SUMMARY DATA RELATING TO VARIABLES EMPLOYED IN THE ANALYSIS 299

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Description	Page
8.1	Intercorrelations: Perceptions of Crime	119
9.1	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between sex and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between sex and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Media Factors, Victimization, Residential Factors and Resentment of Social Change: r	133
9.2	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Age and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Age and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Media Factors, Victimization, Residential Factors and Resentment of Social Change: r	134
9.3	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Socioeconomic Status and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Socioeconomic Status and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Media Factors, Victimization, Residential Factors and Resentment of Social Change: r	135
9.4	Across City Comparisons: Chance of Serious Crime (City), Fear of Assault and Concern with Crime by Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: x^2	141
9.5	Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and R^2	142
9.6	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Media Factors and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Media Factors and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r	145
9.7	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Victimization and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Victimization and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r	146

Table	Description	Page
9.8	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Residential Factors and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Residential Factors and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r	147
9.9	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Resentment of Social Change and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Resentment of Social Change and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r	148
9.10	Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Secondary Status Characteristics: Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and Incremental R^2	154
9.11	Across City Comparisons: Chance of Serious Crime (City), Fear of Assault and Concern with Crime by Media Factors, Victimization, Length of Time in City and Resentment of Social Change: X^2	157
9.12	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Television Viewing and Concern with Crime by City: r	158
9.13	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Length of Time in City and Subjective Probability of Victimization (City) by City: r	159
10.1	Distribution of Responses to Perception Items Across Cities: Percentages of Respondents Providing Specified Responses	164
10.2	Crimes Against the Person, Crimes Against Property, Other Criminal Code Violations and Total Criminal Code Violations: Two-Year Rates per 1000 Population by City, 1975-1978	166
10.3	Population Size and Percentage Population Increase by City, 1974-1978	167
10.4	Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by City: R^2	172
10.5	Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by City: Incremental R^2	173

Table	Description	Page
10.6	Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Population Size, Population Increase (1974-1978) and Two-Year Rate of Crime Against the Person (1977-1978): Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and R^2	176
10.7	Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Length of Time in City, Population Increase and Interaction: Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and R^2	178
11.1	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Perceptions of Crime and Defensive Behaviour: r	185
11.2	Multiple Regression Analysis: Defensive Behaviour by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2	186
11.3	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Interpersonal Trust and Perceptions of Crime: r	188
11.4	Multiple Regression Analysis: Interpersonal Trust by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2	190
11.5	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Neighbourhood Trust and Perceptions of Crime: r	191
11.6	Multiple Regression Analysis: Neighbourhood Trust by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2	192
11.7	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Neighbourhood Affect and Perceptions of Crime: r	194
11.8	Multiple Regression Analysis: Neighbourhood Affect by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2	195
11.9	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between City Affect and Chance of Serious Crime (City): r	196
11.10	Multiple Regression Analysis: City Affect by Chance of Serious Crime (City): Incremental R^2	197
11.11	Across City Comparisons; Defensive Behaviour, City Affect and Interpersonal Trust by Chance of Serious Crime (City) and Fear of Assault: x^2	200
11.12	Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between "City" is a Good Place to Raise Children and Chance of Serious Crime (City) by City: r	201

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The following chapters are concerned with an analysis of public perceptions of crime. Interest in the social processes which affect the nature and consequences of public definitions of crime is relatively recent in criminology. It is only since the late 1960's and early 1970's that expanding criminological interest in all phases of the "crime problem" has focused attention upon the public as an object of study. In a very short period of time, the manner in which members of the public think and feel about crime and criminals, came to be defined as deserving of social scientific attention. A voluminous literature has been produced as both academic criminologists and policy makers have sought to understand the public expression of crime-related fear, concern and anxiety.

It may be argued that the rapidly accelerating interest in public perceptions of crime has functioned as a two-edged sword. In one sense, the effects have been beneficial in that numerous and varied research efforts have been undertaken thereby yielding a rich body of empirically interesting material. More critically however, it might be suggested that this rapid diversification of research interest has undermined the conceptual and theoretical development of the area.

The employment of an inconsistent and constantly changing terminology by specialists in the field, reflects a scientific immaturity which is only sporadically addressed in the literature. Additionally, there have been only a few attempts to clarify the theoretical issues relating to perceptions of crime as a substantive area of study and as a subarea of both criminology and sociology.

The present research constitutes an attempt to come to terms with many of the inadequacies which characterize the modern study of public perceptions of crime. It attempts to clarify and to expound upon the central conceptual and theoretical issues involved in a substantive analysis of such perceptions. As far as possible, an effort is made to support this analysis with empirical data collected from a seven city sample of Canadian respondents. Moreover, the present analysis endeavours to suggest the extent to which the study of public perceptions of crime is relevant to more central theoretical themes in both criminology and sociology. By design, the scope of the analysis that follows is quite broad. The overall strategy is to order a vast array of theoretical and empirical data and to provide structure to an emerging area of criminological interest.

In Chapter 2 which follows, attention is focused upon a discussion of major conceptual issues relating to the study of public perceptions of crime. While the need for clarification of this type is obvious, it is nonetheless lacking. Thus, an effort is made to suggest some means by which such clarification may be achieved.

The three chapters which follow Chapter 2 are concerned with an examination of perceptions of crime as a substantive issue in criminology. Chapters 3 and 4 provide relevant literature reviews and present hypotheses relating to the factors which condition and affect these perceptions. Such perceptions, it will be argued, are the outcomes of complex social processes involving both social actor and social environmental characteristics.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of possible behavioural and attitudinal consequences of public perceptions of crime. Thus, attention is directed towards such perceptions as the producers of outcomes. Again, a general theoretical framework for the examination of this issue is suggested and specific hypotheses are proposed.

The discussion of the methodological design, research hypotheses and empirical findings relating to the examination of these substantive issues is found in Chapters 6 through 11.

While the substantive questions relating to the antecedents and consequences of public perceptions of crime constitute the major focus of the present research effort, they are by no means the only ones addressed. Throughout the chapters that follow, but specifically in Chapter 12, attention is devoted to a consideration of the complex relationships which link perceptions of crime to important theoretical concerns in both criminology and sociology. The analysis of public perceptions of crime, it will be argued, brings important insights to bear on issues relating to the effects of crime, the etiology of crime and the criminalization process.

To illustrate the practical value of studying public perceptions of crime, Chapter 13 explores the relationship between such perceptions and quality of life research. That discussion indicates that perceptual measures may have pragmatic utility as indicators of environmental quality. Finally, Chapter 14 provides a summary and discussion of the preceding chapters as well as some suggestions for future research.

While it is acknowledged that a number of the theoretical proposals suggested here lack empirical support and must be considered as speculative, they are offered in the hope that they may provide a basis for more rigorous and thus more profitable theoretical and empirical research.

CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Introduction

Any discussion of the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the public's perceptions of crime must be preceded by a consideration of the conceptual bases that would underlie such a discussion. This task is not a simple one. Criminological interest in the area of public perception of crime has expanded rapidly, and as a result, a consistent vocabulary with respect to the subject matter does not yet exist. As Kleinman and David observe:

> Researchers often exercise a poetic license in their choices; what one researcher calls a perception index is another's anxiety index (1973: 25).

Such a state of affairs has produced a confusing terminology which makes difficult comparisons across studies and generalization with respect to research findings.

While the present research employs the concept of public perception of crime, it is admitted that numerous terms are in use which seem to overlap or be synonomous with this designation. For instance, terms such as public attitudes, (Biderman et al, 1967; Courtis, 1970; Creechan, Hartnagel and Silverman, 1978; Dow, 1967; McIntyre, 1967; Van Dijk, 1978) public opinion (Garafolo, 1977; Gibbons et al, 1972; Hindelang, 1974; Tepperman, 1977) and public conceptions (Quinney, 1970) are frequently and somewhat casually employed in the literature to label social action cognitive and affective orientations to crime in the environment.

It is of course true that even in the more general literature of social psychology, concepts such as opinion, attitude, belief and conception seem to lack definitional precision. (Albig, 1956; Allport, 1954; Best, 1973; Childs, 1965; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1972; Oskamp, 1977; Katz, 1966). As McGuire notes, the confusion in social psychology regarding attitudes, opinions and related terms is suggestive of:

> names in search of a distinction
> rather than a distinction in search
> of terminology (1969: 153).

Because of these conceptual difficulties, it may be advantageous to consider in some detail exactly what is meant by the phrase, public perceptions of crime. To this end, the present chapter will discuss a number of related issues. First, an attempt will be made to indicate the points of convergence and divergence which link present research concerns to the more general study of perception in criminology. Second, attention will be devoted to a consideration of the suitability of the qualifier "public" as a mechanism for delimiting perceptual study. Finally, an effort will be made to indicate what might be the most salient dimensions of public perception of crime.

Perception and Criminology

The concept of perception has been implicit in much sociological theory and research. For instance, within the traditional contexts of subcultural (Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Miller, 1958) neutralization (Sykes and Matza, 1957) and differential association (Sutherland, 1924) theories of criminogenesis, attempts have been made to understand how social actors perceive the world and how these perceptions result in deviant conduct.

In the 1960's, as criminological interest expanded beyond a narrow concern with the offender, theoretical and research attention began to focus upon the perceptions associated with specialized roles within the criminal justice system (Black and Reiss, 1967; LaFave, 1965; Hogarth, 1971). With the emergence of the labelling perspective (Becker, 1963; Scheff, 1966) and the theory of the social reality of crime (Quinney, 1970) perceptual issues became increasingly salient. Such developments clearly demanded comprehensive framework within which questions relating to perception in criminology could be addressed.

The most comprehensive theoretical examination of the role of perception in criminology is provided by Henshel and Silverman (1975) who suggest that the focus upon perception constitutes a strategy for the investigation of a number of areas of criminological interest. For these writers, perception represents subjectively based information of variable accuracy upon which behavioural decisions are based. In proposing a model of man as rational but not information-seeking the authors suggest a theoretical compromise between voluntaristic and mechanistic models of social action:

> As we see it, on the one hand, man's actions are indeed purposive, the direct product of consciousness and choice, and the individual ascribes meaning to a situation by interpreting the information he obtains about it. This is a process unique for each individual but on the other hand, certain common tendencies in how interpretation is done can be found in persons with similar previous experiences, while people occupying similar social positions will tend to receive similar information out of the total

> information matrix. To that extent, it does seem legitimate to speak of "factors" being involved in human behavior and we must part company with those who feel that acceptance of a voluntaristic component precludes the possibility of social forces (1975: 4).

According to Henshel and Silverman, the social psychological nature of this perception framework has two important implications for theory and research. The first such implication concerns the nature of methodological inquiry. Unlike the phenomenological, reality construction and sociology of knowledge approaches, the perception framework is quantitatively oriented. The second major implication of the model relates to the issue of veridicality. Unlike much phenomenology and sociology of knowledge, the theoretical scheme suggested by Henshel and Silverman does not deny an objective reality which exists independent of the perceptions of social actors. Therefore, within the perception framework, it is assumed:

> that an independent reality exists, even for most social phenomena, and that perceptions do not in most cases change that reality. Perceptions can be (in the older social psychological language) more or less "veridical"--that is, free from error or distortion (1975: 13).

Thus, given a model of man as rational but not information-seeking and given the assumption of objectively existing realities, the role of perceptual error in the decision-making process is of central importance.

The approach suggested by Henshel and Silverman is valuable in that it provides a comprehensive theoretical framework within which crime-related perceptual process may be investigated. Thus, the present analysis attempts to maintain a continuity with this approach in three important ways. First, the present research is concerned with the quantitative analysis of perception data. Second, the theoretical model presented in subsequent chapters assumes that objective realities (such as rates of crime) exist independent of actors' perceptions of them. Finally and perhaps most importantly, the model of behaviour presented in the chapters that follow is consistent with Henshel and Silverman's theoretical compromise between voluntaristic and mechanistic approaches to social action.

It should be noted, however, that there are two important respects in which the present research departs from the perception framework outlined by Henshel and Silverman. In the first instance, the emphasis which those authors placed upon perceptual error and rationality minimizes the importance of an affective perceptual component. It is likely that much crime-related decision-making flows from perceptions of the social world which are emotionally--rather than rationally--based. For instance, it may be argued, in the present context, that the negative consequences associated with public perceptions of crime are more closely related to affective perceptions (such as fear) than they are to more cognitive perceptions (such as the perception that crime is increasing). It is clear that with respect to these substantively important affective perceptions, the issue of perceptual error may be irrelevant. Thus, the research reported here is concerned, in part at least, with perceptions which violate the requirement of verdicality.

The present research also differs from the work of Henshel and Silverman with respect to the scope of analysis. Whereas those authors attempted to develop a comprehensive model of crime-related perceptions,present interest is focused narrowly upon an analysis of the manner in which members of the public cognitively and affectively define the nature and extent of crime as the social environment. The precise nature of these cognitive and affective dimensions is discussed in greater detail below. Before proceeding, however, it may be advantageous to clarify the manner in which the qualifier, public, is to be used in the present context.

The Public Nature of Perception

It is in discussions of opinion, that the concept of the public is most frequently found in modern sociology. Numerous definitions of the concept of public opinion exist in the literature:

> public opinion refers to the shared opinions of large groups of people (sometimes called publics) who have particular characteristics in common (Oskamp, 1977: 16).
>
> public opinion is the complex of preferences expressed by a significant number of persons on an issue of general importance (Hennessy, 1975: 5).
>
> public opinion is the expression on a controversial point within an interest group (MacDougall, 1966: 25).
>
> public opinion is the distribution of opinion within a public (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1954: 68).
>
> public opinion is that which is communicated to decision-makers as a consequence of the functioning of the public (Turner and Killian, 1972: 180).

Clearly, the term public opinion suggests a number of interpretations at the conceptual level. Yet, even when considered by itself, the term public lacks definitional precision. For writers such as Childs, (1965: 13) the words public and group "are for all practical purposes interchangeable". According to Young (1954), however, a public designates any loose association of individuals held together by common interests, a common cultural base and various mechanical means of communication. In somewhat similar terms, MacDougall (1966) writes that while a public is not a formal type of social organization, its members have a sense of belonging.

For some commentators, however, the concept of a public has little meaning apart from the attitudes or opinions which members of the public hold. Lasswell and Kaplan, for instance, write that a public:

> consists of the persons in the group who have or expect to have an opinion (1954: 68).

Similarly, for Blumer:

> the peculiarity of the public is that it is marked by disagreement and hence by discussion as to what should be done (regarding a contentious issue) (1966: 47).

A more comprehensive example of this approach to defining a public is provided by Turner and Killian:

> a public is a dispersed group of people interested in and divided about an issue, engaged in a discussion of the issue with a view to registering a collective opinion which is expected to affect the course of action of some group or individual (1972: 179).

The problematical nature of the term public has been discussed by Allport (1954) who suggests that definitional issues aside, the concept of the public seriously risks the reification of what is essentially an individualistic phenomenon. Although, he is specifically concerned with opinions, his comments are instructive in a more general sense. He writes that:

> opinions are reactions of individuals, they cannot be allocated to publics without becoming ambiguous and unintelligible for research (1954: 53).

Despite the numerous problems associated with the concept of the public, it will nonetheless be employed in the present research as a qualifier of perceptions of crime. There are primarily two reasons for perpetuating this usage. First, the designation public does suggest the essentially sociological nature of the perspective that will be employed to examine perceptions of crime. While the present research does not equate publics with even quasi-organized social collectivities, it does attempt to examine and explain the social patterning of perception. It is hoped that the employment of the adjective public to describe perceptions will underscore this intention. There is, however, a second justification for the employment of the term public in the present context. The research reported here asks and attempts to answer questions relating to perceptions of crime as they are held by members of the society-at-large. Thus, the perceptions which are held by member of specialized groups in, for instance, the criminal justice system, are not included in the analysis. It is felt that public, in the simplistic sense of vox populi, is an aptly descriptive term.

The Nature of Public Perceptions of Crime

It may be desirable, before proceeding, to summarize and expand upon the comments which have been made thus far regarding the major concepts to be employed in this study.

It has been stated that the term perception will be employed to indicate the subjective manner in which social actors define the nature and extent of crime within their social environments. These perceptions may be termed public, in that they are held by members of society-at-large and may be conceptualized as sociological phenomena.

As suggested earlier, it may prove useful, at least at the conceptual level, to distinguish between cognitive and affective perceptions of crime. These perceptions which are purely cognitive would relate to dimensions of a purely "factual" nature. If respondents to a survey were asked to indicate the extent to which the rate of a particular crime is increasing, or which areas of a city have the highest rates of crime, or the degree to which the probability of victimization has increased during a specified period, they are in effect being asked to report their cognitive perceptions of what could best be described as empirically based phenomena. It is with respect to such cognitive perceptions that the framework provided by Henshel and Silverman is most applicable.

These cognitive perceptions may be distinguished from those perceptions which are affective in nature. Affective perceptions are primarily emotionally-based. When respondents are asked questions about their fears or anxieties regarding the possibility of criminal victimization, it is clear that the researcher is attempting to acquire data of other than a cognitive nature. Thus, one individual may define the level of crime as frighteningly high or dangerously high, while another may not.

The literature relating to public perception of crime suggests the importance of two major types of affective definitions (Furstenberg, 1971; Lotz, 1979). The first such response is labelled fear of crime and involves an apprehension or anxiety relating to the perceived possibility of criminal victimization. The other important type of affective perception which has been discussed in the literature is concern with crime. Concern, unlike fear, suggests an impersonal and somewhat generalized level of worry with respect to the seriousness of the crime problem. Clearly, it is quite possible to be concerned about the crime problem without necessarily being afraid of personal victimization.

The suggestion of a utility to be gained by making a conceptual distinction between cognitive and affective perceptions of crime should not be interpreted as implying that these two types of perception are unrelated. At the most simplistic level, it might be suggested that particular affective perceptions of crime are the result of particular cognitive perceptions of crime. In other words, social actors may perceive increasing levels of victimization and as a result become increasingly afraid of being victimized, or, they may perceive high levels of crime and as a consequence, become concerned regarding the putative deleterious effects of crime on the community.

However, it is unlikely that the relationship between cognitive and affective perceptions of crime is this obvious. No doubt, the relationship between these types of perception is, to some extent at least, reciprocal. Stated simply, those persons who are fearful with respect to the possibility of criminal victimization are likely to be somewhat more sensitive to cues in the environment, which suggest that the possibily of victimization is increasing; and, those individuals who are concerned about effects of crime on the community may be more likely than those who are not concerned to perceive evidence of high rates of crime. In fact, some writers such as McGuire (1969), suggest that with respect to perception in general, the distinction between affective and cognitive components may be a false one and thus the onus rests with the researcher to empirically demonstrate such a distinction.

It is felt, however, that for purposes of the present research, it would be unproductive and premature to obscure such a distinction since it might, in fact, prove useful. Thus, the original data analysis presented in Chapters 6 through 11 is designed to allow for an investigation of both cognitive and affective components. With respect to the former dimension, items are included which are intended to assess respondents' subjective probability of victimization. The concept of subjective probability of victimization was introduced by Block and Long, (1973) and refers to the degree to which individuals perceive the chances of criminal victimization. Obviously, such probabilities may exist with respect to a number of different contexts. Thus, the present research employs a number of indicators in order to separately estimate subjective probability of victimization with respect to neighborhood of respondent, city of respondent and the specific crimes of break and enter and assault.

In terms of affective perceptions of crime, the present study employs indicators of both fear and concern. Fear of crime is assessed with respect to feelings of personal safety in the neighbourhood and expressed anxiety about the possibility of assault and break and enter victimization. Concern is measured through the employment of a simple index which measures the degree to which respondents perceive crime as a salient "problem".

It is true that the utilization of such a large number of perceptual indicators increases the risk of expanding and unnecessarily complicating the analysis. However, it is felt that the use of several indicators is justified for three reasons. First, it is important to note that the vast majority of investigations of public perceptions of crime have employed single indicators. Given the uncertain conceptual basis of this area of study, it is advisable to employ several indicators in order to more fully assess such perception. A second reason for the present approach concerns the methodological pitfalls involved in creating complex indexes or scales of perception (Babbie, 1975). Since so little is known about the measurement of perception of crime, such cumulative techniques could seriously compound measurement problems. Finally, the employment of a number of indicators, as discussed above, allows several dimensions of perception to be investigated independently. As mentioned in the introduction, the overall concern of the present project is breadth of analysis. In Chapter 8, the individual perceptual indicators will be given more lengthy consideration as will the interrelationships existing between them.

Having hopefully clarified to some extent the basic conceptual issues which are of concern in the present context, it is necessary to discuss in some detail the factors which condition and affect the content and distribution of public perceptions of crime. These issues are explored in detail in the two chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 3

THE DETERMINANTS OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: SOCIAL STATUS DIMENSIONS

Introduction

The vast majority of attempts to investigate public perceptions of crime have attempted to determine the relationships existing between these perceptions and the social and demographic characteristics of social actors. In doing so, these studies have implicitly conceptualized public perceptions of crime as "social psychological phenomena". The phrase social psychological phenomena, is intended to imply that perceptions of crime are viewed in terms of the role and status dimensions of social actors. In other words, the methodologies used in, and the conclusions drawn from such studies suggest that perceptions of crime may be theoretically related to the positions which individuals occupy in society and the behavioural sets associated with those positions. The differentiation of actors, according to their role and status attributes, is thought to be indicative of differentials in life experiences, as these experiences relate to perceptions of crime.

This chapter will review those studies which suggest an interpretation of the perception issue in role- and status- related terms. Major independent variables in this regard will be isolated, and hypotheses regarding their effects will be proposed. Additionally, an effort will be made to indicate what might be some common role and status features of those basic social aggregates characterized by common perceptual orientations to crime. Finally, tt will be suggested that the social psychological interpretation, although valuable, is by itself, incapable of providing an acceptable theoretical context for understanding the determinants of public perception.

Previous Research

The first systematic studies of public perception of crime were undertaken under the auspices of the U.S. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1967a; 1967b). This research involved the collection of survey data relating to public perceptions of crime in three research settings: among a national sample, within selected police precincts in Washington, D.C., and in the selected cities of Chicago and Boston. Each study is discussed in turn.

The national data were collected by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in conjunction with its nation-wide victimization study, (Ennis, 1967). Generally, the results of the research indicated that concern with crime was fairly widespread. Respondents were asked to choose from a list of six social problems the one to which they had been paying most attention recently. Crime ranked second only to race relations, for all categories of respondents except non-whites earning less that $6,000 per year. About one-third of the respondents reported that they did not feel safe when walking alone in their own neighbourhoods at night. Despite this finding however, over 60% of those questioned compared their own neighbourhoods favourably with other parts of their cities regarding the possibility of criminal victimization. This was true even in areas, which according to police records, were characterized by high rates of crime. Thus crime was seen as a more likely characteristic of places other than one's immediate social environment. The tendency to see one's neighbourhood as comparatively safe is a finding which has been borne out by later research (Hindelang, Gottredson, Garafolo, 1978). It may be, as Lejuene and Alex (1973) argue, that some feelings of relative invulnerability are necessary if people are to be able to conduct the daily business of living with some degree of psychological ease. Nonetheless, about 16% of those questioned in the NORC study reported that there had been times in the recent past when they had stayed home rather than go out because going out was viewed as unsafe.

Respondents to the national survey were also asked about the types of precautionary measures which they had taken to protect themselves against crime. Of those polled, 82% reported that they had always kept their doors locked at night. Twenty-five percent always kept their doors locked during the day, even if other household members were at home. Twenty-eight percent kept watchdogs and 37% kept guns in the house "for protection among other reasons".

The taking of such precautionary measures indicates that the type of crime which the respondents feared most and about which they were most concerned was violent personal crime--perpetrated at the hands of a stranger. According to official statistics, however, such offences constitute a rather small proportion of all crimes committed (Nettler, 1978). In addition, most violent crimes involve relatives and acquaintances rather than strangers. Despite the fact that the public probably suffers a greater degree of victimization as a result of the activities of organized and white-collar criminals, such criminality does not seem to arouse a great deal of concern or anxiety. As several writers have pointed out, white-collar crime and organized crime are generally too abstract in nature to be perceived as threatening (Tallman, 1976; Conklin, 1973). In this respect, the President's Commission concluded:

> The public fears most crimes which occur least--crimes of violence. People are much more tolerant of crimes against property which constitute most of the crimes that are committed against persons or households or businesses (1967b, 88).

The NORC researchers attempted to develop a six item scale which measured public anxiety with respect to crime. Generally, scores based on this scale were not found to be related to respondents' personal experience with victimization (McIntyre, 1967). The results did show, however, that victims were more concerned about burglary and robbery than were non-victims. This was true for both males and females, although females, whether victimized or not, were more concerned about their safety than were males who had been victimized. Other data from the NORC study revealed that the recent experience of being a victim did not seem to increase the likelihood of taking precautionary measures, since almost identical proportions of victims and non-victims took such measures. However, persons who worried about burglary and robbery were 50% more likely to take precautionary measures than were those who worried about neither.

The study conducted by the Bureau of Social Science Research (BSSR) in selected police precincts in Washington, D.C. was, in actuality, a pilot study which preceded the national survey (Biderman et al, 1967). The two studies produced consistent pictures of public perception and anxiety. Asked about recent trends in the crime problem, 75% of the respondents answered that crime in Washington was getting worse while only 16% indicated that they thought the problem had remained about the same. As discussed with respect to the national study, Washington respondents tended to see their own neighbourhoods as safer than other parts of the city even when they resided in areas which had high official rates. About 80% of those questioned perceived their chances of being assaulted in other parts of the city as greater than in their own neighbourhoods. The BSSR study utilized a five-item scale intended to measure both fear of personal victimization and general concern with the crime problem. Analyses of the relationships between respondents' anxiety scores and measures of personal victimization, revealed that anxiety, so defined, did not appear to be a function of personal experience with crime. Among both black and white respondents, men had higher rates of victimization, yet women consistently had higher anxiety scores. Generally speaking, anxiety scores tended to be higher for black than for white respondents. The data also appeared to reveal no consistent relationship between the level of anxiety and the objective characteristics of an area, as measured by official crime statistics.

In addition to examining the relationship between personal victimization and anxiety, the BSSR researchers attempted to relate anxiety to the broader concept of "crime exposure". It was found that such exposure was generally not related to a variety of attitudes concerning crime and law enforcement except among black males.

The President's Commission also surveyed victimization and public perceptions of crime in the selected cities of Boston and Chicago (Reiss, 1967). Again, the research revealed a high level of public anxiety. Twenty percent of the sample stated that they wished to move out of their present neighbourhoods because of the crime problem. This figure was as high as 30% in high crime rate areas. In these high crime rate areas, 28% of the respondents reported installing new locks because of their concern with the possibility of criminal victimization. Ten percent had put locks and bars on windows and 9% said that they carried weapons when they went out. In these same areas 5 out of 8 respondents reported changes in habits as a response to crime. Forty-three percent reported that they stayed off the streets altogether, while a further 35% of the respondents stated that they had stopped talking to strangers.

One of the most interesting findings to emerge from these studies was the absence of a relationship between public perceptions of crime and the objective levels of crime which characterized the areas within which respondents lived. The nature of the relationship between objective community characteristics and public perception is a central concern of the present research and will be discussed at length in the next chapter. It should be pointed out at this stage, however, that a subsequent reanalysis of the NORC data by Block and Long (1973) suggested that the Commissions' findings may have been incorrect in this regard. Using an econometrics approach, these researchers found support for the hypothesis of a relationship between crime levels and respondents' subjective probability of victimization. According to Block and Long, the NORC data supported the contention that, although specific victimization does not affect public perceptions, general experience with crime (as indicated by objective crime levels) might affect such perceptions.

Despite the valuable exploratory nature of the Commission studies, they are not without their shortcomings, as the inconsistency revealed by Block and Long's reanalysis seems to indicate. As discussed in the previous chapter, these early studies, like many that were to follow lacked a sufficient degree of conceptual clarity. Terms such as "anxiety","fear" and "concern" were not clearly defined, either conceptually or with respect to their attitudinal or behavioural referents.

One attempt to improve upon the concepts used in the Commission studies is found in Furstenberg's (1971) reanalysis of Harris poll data, which had been collected in an earlier study of public opinion in Baltimore. Furstenberg made an important conceptual distinction between "concern with crime" and "fear of crime". He stated that both the Crime Commission and the Harris survey considered fear of victimization and concern with crime to be interchangeable and yet examination of the indicators employed to measure these concepts indicated that they were not at all equivalent. Fear of crime is usually operationalized in terms of the respondents perception of his or her own chances of criminal victimization. Concern, on the other hand, is usually operationalized in such a way as to assess the respondents' general level of worry with respect to the seriousness of the crime problem.

Furstenberg argued that two explanations have been advanced to explain the sharp increase in apprehension about crime in the United States. Some critics have said that the wave of anxiety is largely an irrational reaction to rapid social change. On the other hand, some commentators have suggested that the publics' reaction to crime is largely justified. They note that the rate of crime, according to official statistics, has been steadily increasing over the past ten years. By making a distinction between concern with and fear of crime, Furstenberg argued that both interpretations may be correct, but for different segments of the population.

A total of 1545 people were interviewed in the Baltimore survey. The sample was stratified to give equal representation to residents living in high, medium and low crime rate areas as assessed on the basis of official statistics. Early in the interview, respondents were provided with a card listing ten domestic problems and asked to select the "single most serious problem" that they "would like to see the government do something about". Crime was ranked most serious by more respondents--about one-third of the entire sample--than any other problem on the list.

Later in the interview, respondents were shown a second card listing various crimes and were asked to estimate the possibility of each one happening to them. The responses to these items were combined into a single index of fear.

As suggested by the previous argument, the two reactions to crime turned out to be unrelated to each other. Those most concerned about the problem of crime were no more or less afraid of victimization than anyone else. That concern with crime did not result from a personal sense of danger became even more evident, when the relationship of concern to the objective risk of victimization was examined. As risk of victimization decreased, concern about crime increased. People in low crime rate areas were significantly more concerned about the problem of crime than were those in high crime rate areas.

Since concern with crime did not emanate from a sense of personal danger, Furstenberg attempted to utilize the data to determine whether such concern was in fact related to resentment of social change. He concluded that:

> (the) findings generally support the view that concern about crime is, at least in part, an expression of resentment of changing social conditions--especially efforts to eliminate minority injustice (1971: 606).

Relating a scale which measured commitment to the existing social order to the measure of concern, revealed that discontent with changing social conditions was in fact associated with high degrees of apprehension about the crime problem. The area of social change that aroused the greatest opposition was racial integration, in that concern about crime was highest among whites most antagonistic to racial reform.

Whereas concern with crime was inversely related to objective crime rates, fear of crime was found to bear a direct relationship to these rates. Thus, contrary to the Crime Commission findings and consistent with the reanalysis of Block and Long, fear of crime was found to increase as risk of victimization increased. Interestingly, Furstenberg also found that within neighborhoods levels of fear tended to be rather consistent across social categories.

Furstenberg's conceptual and theoretical argument found additional empirical support in the recent work of Lotz (1979). Lotz's research relied on a systematic sample of non-business telephone listings from all the most recently published telephone directories in the state of Washington. To each potential respondent a mail-back questionnaire was sent with provisions to represent non-heads of household fairly. Items contained in the instrument were intended to measure the underlying concepts of fear of, and concern with crime, and commitment to the existing social order. The analysis performed by Lotz attempted to investigate the interrelationships among these variables.

Unlike Furstenberg, Lotz found fear and concern to be associated (Gamma = .21). And, the relationship was found to persist within subsets of the sample. Part of the reason for this inconsistency may reside in the fact that Lotz employed indicators which were not identical to those employed by Furstenberg.[1]

In assessing the nature of the relationship between objective and subjective realities of crime, Furstenberg analyzed the link between perceptual indicators and neighbourhood crime levels. Lotz, however, employed victimization experience as his objective measure.

His analysis revealed that victimization was essentially unrelated to concern, but was more strongly related to fear. The difference tended to be most pronounced when the victimization was of self rather than of others.

The measures of opposition to social change employed by Lotz included religiosity and political conservatism. It was found that the linkage of these variables with fear were uniformly low (Gamma = -.02 and .15). Concern, however, was more closely related to the measures of attitude towards change, with Gammas of .20 and .21.

Employing a more sophisticated methodology, Clemente and Kleinman (1977) attempted to apply the techniques of multivariate analysis to an understanding of the determinants of public perceptions of crime. They note, as does Hindelang (1974) that members of certain socio-demographic groups generally express higher levels of fear. Such higher levels of fear are most likely exhibited by females, the aged, blacks, occupants of lower socioeconomic status, and residents of larger communities. For females and the aged, however, these higher levels of fear are inconsistent with the objective risk of victimization.

Clemente and Kleinman were interested in the degree to which these variables, taken together, predict the fear of crime. Previous research, they argued, failed to employ multivariate techniques and thus left the general question of spuriousness unaddressed. They note:

> for example, when simple bivariate survey findings indicate that the elderly are highly afraid of crime we do not know if this is because they are old, poor disproportionately female, relatively uneducated, concentrated in inner cities as opposed to suburbs or as is most likely, a combination of the above (1977: 523).

A total sample size of 2700 respondents was drawn from the 1973 and 1974 General social surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The data were analyzed using regression techniques.

The analysis revealed a marked disparity with respect to the predictive power of the independent variables. Sex, with a Beta-squared of .153 had relatively high explanatory utility. City size, while not as influential also had explanatory power (Beta-squared of .058). The other variables, however, were considerably less important. In total, the five independent variables accounted for only 23% of the variance in the dependent variable. In general, the data indicated that many of the early descriptive studies may have been plagued by serious problems of spuriousness and that multivariate analysis is a valuable means by which to seek understanding of these phenomena.

Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garafolo (1978) have also provided an extensive analysis of public perceptions of crime and their determinants. The data were collected in eight major urban American areas under the auspices of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Several of the attitude items were designed to determine whether or not respondents perceived crime as an imminent threat in their immediate environment. Generally, with respect to these items the data revealed that crime was perceived as being more serious (or extensive or fear-inducing) as the frame of reference moved farther away from the respondent. Stated differently, responses to the relevant attitude items indicated that local crime was perceived as being less violent and less sensational, and hence less threatening than non-local crime. The data analysis also demonstrated that although personal experience with crime did appear to affect perceptions, such experiences did not eliminate the tendency to view crime as primarily a non-local problem. Consistent with this tendency to view crime as primarily a non-local problem, and consistent with previously discussed research, the majority of respondents in the eight-city survey expressed the belief that outsiders were primarily responsible for crime committed in their neighbourhoods.

The authors were interested in determining whether this tendency to view non-local crime as the more serious problem was affected by the objective crime levels of the areas within which respondents resided. While data limitations prevented sorting of respondents according to geographic subareas within cities, the authors attempted to indirectly investigate this relationship by sorting respondents according to race and income. The analysis revealed that even among residents who might be thought to live in relatively high crime neighbourhoods, crime was still perceived as being more dangerous outside the immediate environment.

The investigators also analyzed the relationships between fear of crime and the demographic characteristics of respondents. Income, race, sex and age were all found to have independent effects upon the fear of crime. Fear of crime was found to be positively related to the risk of victimization across family income categories for each racial group, inversely related to the risk of personal victimization faced by age and sex groups, and only marginally related to the experiences of respondents with personal victimization during the 12 month period preceding the interviews. Consistent with earlier research, the variation in fear of crime across age and sex groups was found to be substantial; older respondents and females expressed much more fear of crime than did their younger and male counterparts. A multivariate analysis of the fear of crime indicator confirmed the explanatory importance of sex and age and the marginal effects of experience with personal victimization.

Using the same data set, Garafolo (1979) attempted to develop a causal model to explain the fear of crime. Consistent with explanations advanced in his collaborative work, Garafolo hypothesized four general factors likely to affect fear; the actual risk of being victimized by a criminal act, the content of the socialization processes connected with particular social roles, the content of media presentations about crime and criminals, and the perceived effectiveness of official barriers existing between potential offenders and victims. An analysis of the relationships existing between each independent variable and the fear of crime suggested tentative support for the causal interpretation. To provide further clarity however, Garafolo employed a path analytic technique in order to acquire a multivariate perspective on the problem. The resulting Beta weights indicated that the effects of age and sex--the two role socialization variables--on the fear of crime were substantial. The model also showed that perceptions of the relative dangerousness of one's neighbourhood had a strong effect on the fear of crime. The effects of total personal victimization during the reference period, and respondents' perception of the effectiveness of local police on the fear of crime, were quite small. Insufficient data prevented the incorporation of media variables into the model.

A rather unique methodology was employed by Shotland et al (1979) in order to investigate the fear of crime. The researchers, employing a quasi-experimental design, hypothesized that three variables would be related to fear of crime and the potential willingness to take preventive behaviour. All three of these variables related to the nature of the crime and the criminal-victim interaction. Thus, greater levels of fear were expected; in the case of crimes against the person rather than against property, in the case of crime committed in an area frequented rather than in an area one never enters and in the case of recurring crimes rather than crimes which occur only once.

Two different samples of females were approached at their residence and asked to read one of a number of fictitious crime stories that the news media had supposedly not reported. Subsequently, the respondents were asked to complete two scales intended to measure;(1) emotional response to the crime and (2) potential behavioural response to the crime. The results indicated that a physical assault produced more fear and more potential behavioural change than a burglary. In addition, the results suggested that crimes which occurred frequently were more likely to induce fear and to provoke behavioural change than a crime which occurred infrequently. Finally, there was some evidence to suggest that the crime which occurred in an area which respondents frequented was more likely to evoke fear than a crime occurring in an area which the respondent never entered.

Data relating to public perceptions of crime in the Netherlands were analyzed by Van Dijk (1978). Most of his findings concurred with those of the American research reported above. According to Van Dijk, his analysis suggested that the absence of a relationship between general perceptions of crime and recent victimization experience. Also consistent with the American research, the data collected in the Netherlands indicated the importance of sex and urbanization as variables affecting perception. Interestingly, Van Dijk's analysis like those of Furstenberg and Lotz presented evidence of the degree to which public perceptions of crime may be related to other perceptual predispositions. The Netherlands data revealed that both fear of and concern with crime were related to an aversion to the lifestyle of the "younger generation". Concern with crime also seemed to be related to a dislike of certain political orientations.

With respect to the Canadian situation specifically, there has been almost a complete absence of research dealing with the nature of determinants of public perceptions of crime. Two studies, however, may be briefly discussed. Courtis (1970) collected data from a sample of Toronto residents regarding victimization and attitudes towards crime and the criminal justice system. Of those polled, 74% expressed the feeling that crime was increasing while only 18% stated the perception that the level of crime was neither increasing nor decreasing. Among those respondents who felt that crime was increasing, the largest proportion expressed the feeling that violent crime showed the greatest increase. In addition, 25% of the respondents reported taking extra precautionary measures to secure their homes against crime. However, 55% of the respondents stated that they did not worry at all about their homes being broken into, and 63% were unconcerned about the possibility of being attacked or assaulted. Female and younger respondents were more likely to report "worrying alot" about these crimes.

More recently, Creechan, Hartnagel and Silverman (1978) investigated public perceptions of crime and related topics among a sample of Edmonton residents. The data were collected as part of the University of Alberta 1977 Edmonton Area Study which is a yearly amalgam survey of the population of Edmonton. In addition to other issues, respondents to the 1977 survey were interviewed concerning their perceptions of violent crime trends in the city "over the last five years", their perceptions of vandalism and misbehaving juveniles as neighbourhood problems, their satisfaction with their personal safety in their neighbourhoods, and their rating of the safety of the city as a whole.

With respect to perceptions of violent crime trends, 48%

of the respondents expressed the feeling that there was "a lot more" violent crime in the city and an additional 31% reported that there was "quite a bit more".

A large majority of the respondents did not consider vandalism or misbehaving juveniles to be a problem in their own neighbourhoods. Similarly, most respondents were very satisfied with their personal safety in their own neighbourhoods and only 7% were very dissatisfied. These findings are, of course, consistent with research cited earlier. When asked to rate the safety of the city as a whole, only 1/3 considered it very safe, while 17% responded that it was unsafe.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether or not, in the previous year, anyone had entered their homes illegally or taken something from them by force. The victims of either of these two crimes were significantly more likely to view misbehaving juveniles as a problem than were non-victims. In addition, victims tended to be less satisfied with their personal safety in their neighbourhoods and more likely to view the city as unsafe, when compared with non-victims.

The authors also examined the manner in which responses to these items varied according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Females, those with less education and the older respondents tended to be more likely to perceive increases in violent crime. Perceptions of vandalism as a neighbourhood problem tended to be more characteristic of females and those with less education. Females were only slightly more likely than males to perceive misbehaving juveniles as a neighbourhood problem and there was evidence that respondents over 55 years of age were less likely to view this as a problem than were younger respondents.

Males, the better educated, those with higher incomes and younger respondents tended to be more satisfied with their personal safety in their own neighbourhoods. Males were also more likely than females to consider the city as safe. And, although the difference was not statistically significant, those respondents with some college education were slightly more likely to consider the city as safe than were those with less education.

Most of the findings of the Edmonton study are consistent with the findings of the American studies discussed earlier. The authors noted that this consistency is somewhat puzzling given the different objective reality of crime in Canada as compared to the United States. By way of interpreting these consistencies, the authors suggested the possibility that American mass media, pervasive in Edmonton, may have the effect of shaping a perceptual reality of crime which is inconsistent with the differing objective reality.

Primary and Secondary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime

This chapter began by stating that most of the studies of public perception have been concerned with these perceptions as they relate to the role and status dimensions of social actors. As the above review has indicated, the tendency to conceptualize the problems in terms of an aggregate psychology has resulted in a concern with the manner in which perceptions vary across social and demographic categories.

In general, the literature discussed here suggests that two major type of status characteristics may be distinguished. The first type may be said to include those status attributes which fundamentally affect life experiences. Specifically, in terms of the present analysis, the status characteristics of interest in this regard are sex, age and socioeconomic status. The second major type of status classification includes those characteristics which, in large part, may be said to emerge out of and reflect the influence of sex, age and socioeconomic status. For present purposes, such characteristics include media behaviour, victimization experience, resentment of social change and neighbourhood and city residency. For the sake of convenience, these two major types of status attributes are referred to as primary and secondary respectively. Each is discussed below.

Primary Status Characteristics

The preceding literature review suggested that there is evidence to indicate that the primary status attributes of sex, age and socioeconomic status are importantly related to perceptions of crime. The nature of each of these independent variables and its relationship to perceptions of crime will be considered in turn.

1. sex. Almost all of the studies reviewed seem to indicate the importance of sex as a predictor of public perceptions of crime. Overall, it seems the females are more likely to be fearful regarding the possibility of criminal victimization than are men. This greater level of fear may be seen as inconsistent with the lower level of actual victimization experienced by women. As Riger et al

(1978) suggest, explanations of the greater levels of fear exhibited by women are either woman-centered or crime-centered. The former type of explanation places emphasis upon the argument that women are socialized into greater feelings of vulnerability and dependency than are males. Crime-centered explanations on the other hand, consider the special importance of rape as a crime related threat experienced by women almost exclusively.

2. age. Most of the studies discussed above also suggest the importance of age as a predictor of perceptions of crime, although, the relationship is weaker than in the case of sex. Generally, the data seem to indicate that older respondents are more likely than younger respondents to fear crime. As in the case of women, this heightened perception on the part of older respondents is inconsistent with objective levels of victimization. By way of explanation, it may be suggested that the elderly experience greater feelings of vulnerability due to weakened physical condition and emotional isolation (Hahn, 1976; Cook, 1976). While some writers may view the greater fear among elderly respondents as irrational in view of the lower objective probabilities of victimization, others such as Jaycox (1978), dispute this claim. She reports research conducted by the Behavioral Science Laboratory, in which 1600 citizens aged sixty and over in eight neighbourhoods in four American cities were interviewed regarding their perceptions of crime. Jaycox concludes that the perceptions of the elderly seem to be related to the realities of the crime situations in which they live.

3. socioeconomic status. A number of the studies discussed above also suggest the importance of a relationship between perceptions of crime and socioeconomic status.[2] With respect to this relationship, the argument has generally been made that the more intense perceptions expressed by lower socioeconomic status respondents is, at least in part, a function of their higher rates of victimization. Thus, it is argued, that since residence in the United States and elsewhere is usually segregated by socioeconomic status, the relationship between such status and perceptions of crime may reflect the influence of the higher objective levels of crime, characteristic of the neighbourhood within which these respondents live.

As these summaries indicate, attempts to explain the more intense perceptions of crime held by women, the aged and occupants of lower socioeconomic status, have tended to focus attention upon explanatory factors unique to the status position under consideration. Relatively little attention, however, has been devoted to a consideration of the role and status similarities which might suggest a common conceptual basis for understanding the more intense perceptions associated with being female, older and of lower socioeconomic status.

In this regard, three general explanations of the relationship between primary status characteristics and perceptions of crime may be advanced. The first such explanation asserts that females, the elderly and lower socioeconomic status occupants are more likely than males, younger persons and higher socioeconomic status occupants, to engage in behaviours likely to exaggerate perceptions of crime. This argument asserts that there is nothing intrinsic to being female, older or of socioeconomic status that would lead to accentuated perception. Rather, such relationships may be explained away on the basis of appropriate intervening variables.

A second explanation of the relationship between primary status attributes and perception is based upon a concept of vulnerability. This argument suggests that females, the elderly and lower socioeconomic status occupants have a greater tendency to express fear of crime, but, that the extent to which this tendency manifests itself depends upon the degree to which these social actors are confronted with threatening conditions. In other words, the status groups of interest, because of feelings of vulnerability, are more sensitive than their counterparts to threats in the social environment. Thus, for example, females may have a greater potential for fear but, how afraid females become depends upon the level of threat. As Conklin suggests:

> the attitudes of women might be a more sensitive indicator of the criminal environment than the attitudes of an entire population of an area (1975: 83).

While Conklin restricts his argument to females, in this regard, the present research generalizes this position to include the other primary status characteristics as well.

A third explanation of the relationship between primary status characteristics and perceptions of crime may involve the concept of the minority group. This explanation is particularly interesting in that it links the study of public perceptions of crime to more traditional theoretical questions in sociology.

The minority group concept has until recently been synonomous with ethnic and racial divisions although early definition, such as the one provided by Wirth, (1945) were not so limiting. Still, the concern of the field has traditionally been with those social groups which are distinguishable on the basis of racial and ethnic characteristics (Simpson and Yinger, 1965). However, the numerous social movements for group equality which began in the United States and Canada during the 1960's led modern sociology to reconsider the minority group concept. In general the concept has been expanded to include groups other than those distinguishable according to racial and ethnic criteria (Sagarin, 1971).

Interestingly, the groups which seem to exhibit the most intense perceptions of crime are those which have in recent years come to be considered within the minority groups perspective. The argument has been made that women (Johnson, 1976), the elderly (Barron, 1953; Jarvis, 1972) and lower socioeconomic status occupants (Ryan, 1971) are conceptually similar, in that they occupy subordinate social positions, lack adequate power resources and experience greater feelings of alienation.

As an approach, the minority group perspective takes the superordinate and subordinate positions of groups as given~~,~~ and attempts to elaborate the resulting behavioural and attitudinal differences which flow from these differential power positions (Eichler, 1977).

Within this context, affective perceptions of crime may be interpreted as common social psychological dimensions of these substantively different status positions. Such an interpretation of affective perceptions of crime is theoretically quite feasible. Fear of crime for instance may be thought of as a dimension of the more general concept of powerlessness. Fear of crime, feelings of vulnerability, a concern about the inability to protect one's self may suggest a more general underlying concern with a lack of mastery over one's environment. And, the idea expressed in the criminological literature that excessive fear of crime promotes social isolation is theoretically consistent with the social psychological theme of alienation promoting evasion (Hobart, 1965).

Criminologists interested in the study of public perceptions of crime have, in general, neglected the investigation of a possible relationship between, for instance, fear of crime and more generalized feelings relating to the lack of mastery over the environment. An important exception in this regard is found in the work of Cohn, Kidder and Harvey (1978). These authors, in fact, equate the fear of crime with the perceived lack of control and suggest that it may be possible to lower the fear of crime by lowering feelings of helplessness. Data analyzed by these researchers indicated that the fear of crime may be reduced through membership in various kinds of crime prevention and victimization prevention programs.

These comments regarding affective perceptions of crime as powerlessness and powerlessness as a common minority group response, do not deny that for the aged, females and the lower socioeconomic status occupants there are unique status features which influence such perceptions. Rather, it is being suggested that the concepts of minority group and powerlessness may provide unifying themes which allow the status correlates of public perceptions of crime to assume more than descriptive importance.

Unfortunately, however, the minority group interpretation of public perception must for the present remain hypothetical. This is partly because the analysis of public perceptions of crime has generally failed to take into account the wider attitude complex of which perceptions of crime may constitute only components. That such perceptions do not exist in isolation, is obvious. As mentioned, Furstenberg found interesting and significant relationships between concern with crime and resentment of changing social condition. In somewhat different fashion Albrecht and Green (1977), have argued that programs designed to change public attitudes towards the police, often fail because they do not take into account that such attitudes are part of a larger matrix which includes political alienation and involvement in the political system.

The lack of information relating to general feelings of alienation and powerlessness prevents a direct examination of the minority groups approach through the utilization of the present data set. However, given the theoretical viability of this argument, the following specific research hypotheses may be advanced:

h1: The primary status characteristics (sex, age and socioeconomic status) will be related to perceptions of crime in the overall sample. The relationships will be such that females, the elderly and lower socioeconomic status occupants, will experience more negative and more intense perceptions.

h2: Because the relationships involving sex, age and socioeconomic status emerge out of fundamental status dimensions associated with being female, elderly and of lower socioeconomic status, such relationships will not be explained by intervening variables such as media behaviour, victimization, resentment of social change, and length of residency in city or neighbourhood.

h3: Additionally, because the relationships involving perceptions of crime and primary status characteristics are the products of fundamental status attributes rather than a "vulnerability" to crime, such relationships will be unaffected by the larger social context.

These hypotheses are empirically assessed in Chapter 9.

Secondary Status Characteristics

Earlier mention was made of the role which secondary status characteristics might play in influencing public perceptions of crime. Variables of this type which are of interest in the present context include media behaviour, victimization, length of residency and resentment of social change. Each of these variables is given individual attention below:

1. mass media. Often, there is a tendency in the social psychological literature on public perceptions of crime, to attribute an important role to the mass media as determinants of such perception (Brooks, 1974; McIntyre, 1967; Creechan, Hartnagel and Silverman, 1978). The logic of the mass media argument seems to be that since the mass media in both Canada and the United States do in fact contain a high degree of crime content (Deutschmann, 1959; VanHorn, 1952; Bachmuth, Miller and Rosen, 1960; Dominick, et al, 1975; DeFleur, 1964; Smythe, 1954; Dominick, 1973), and since most people do not have direct experience with serious crime, the mass media exert a direct causal effect upon perception.

The mass media effects hypothesis sounds quite plausible but as a theoretical explanation it is deficient in two important respects. First, empirical attempts to demonstrate the presence of a link between public perceptions of crime and mass media have been surprisingly unsuccessful (Hubbard et al, 1975; Teevan and Hartnagel, 1976; Davis, 1951; Roshier, 1973; Christensen and Dillman, 1974). Second, because the hypothesis is usually implicitly rather than explicitly stated, it tends to assume a rather simplistic one-way causal model. This sort of "hypodermic needle" conceptualization of mass media effects (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1975) neglects the complex interplay of various factors which both mediate and supplement mass media influence.

A recent summary of published and unpublished research on the relationship between mass media and public perceptions of crime offers the following conclusion:

> Research findings have indicated that the connections between audience attitudes and beliefs and media content is by no means direct and unambiguous. In other words, media crime content would seem to be a poor predictor of audience response....
>
> All in all, there seem little evidence to support the view that mass media are an important "window on the world" of crime (Cumberbatch and Beardsworth, 1976: 85-86).

On the other hand, Van Dijk (1978) suggests that some existing data, do support a relationship, in the predicted direction, between fear of and concern with crime, and, exposure to crime reports in the daily press. Gerbner and Gross, (1975) also argue that the total effect of television, as a message system, produces the perception, on the part of viewers, that the world is an unsafe place.

Thus, the data are not consistent with respect to the relationship between media exposure and public perceptions of crime. And, taken as a group, these studies indicate that whatever relationship does exist is subtle rather than obvious. It may be that such subtleties are obscured by the simplistic assumptions of a direct effects model.

It may be that a suitable understanding of the possible relationship between media and public perceptions may be suggested by the concept of "agenda-setting" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). To conceptualize the media as performing an agenda setting function is to contend that while the media may not directly affect public perceptions of social issues, they at least determine what is important and deserving of attention. Thus, it may be hypothesized that communities differ with respect to the agenda priority accorded to crime as a "community issue". Large communities, for instance, are likely by simple virtue of their size to report serious violent crime more often than are smaller communities. Consequently, it is possible that similar levels of exposure to mass media in two communities could have quite different effects.

The present research will investigate this hypothesis of "conditional effect" by examining the relationships between media exposure and perceptions of crime across a number of communities. Evidence of differential relationships between media exposure and perceptions of crime, across these communities, will be taken as supportive of the assertion that contextual variables such as community are important in understanding the effects of media on perception.

2. victimization. One of the most interesting findings to emerge from the research of the Presidents' Commission was the absence of a relationship between personal experience with and perceptions of crime. The researchers explained this apparent

anomaly with reference to the nature of most criminal victimization. The overwhelming majority of victimization cases reported to the researchers did not appear to have any significant consequences for the lives of the respondents. This is to some extent evidenced by the fact that respondents seemed to be unable to recall any but the most recent episodes of criminal victimization. This "recency effect" is suggested by the dates given by victimized citizens in response to the question "what is the worst thing that ever happened to you that could be called a crime?" Over one-half of these "worst" incidents were reported to have occurred some time during the eighteen month period, which preceded the survey. Sixty percent of these "worst ever" incidents were said to have transpired in the two year period preceding the survey and only 21% were said to have happened more than five years before.

The Commission concluded that since the vast majority of the public had not had first-hand experience with violent crime, and since most victims do not consider crimes as significant life-events, the public's perception of crime generally, and, the public's fear of violent crime specifically, must largely be derived from vicarious sources. The Commission, however, did not investigate the nature of these sources.

The absence of a significant relationship between victimization and public perceptions of crime was further evidenced by Block and Long's (1973) reanalysis of the NORC data. Using an econometrics approach, these authors concluded that there existed no consistent relationship between specific victimization and subjective probability of being victimized. Robbery victims, when compared with respondents who had not been victims of robbery, provided higher estimates of their chances of further victimization. Burglary victims, however, provided lower subjective probabilities of further victimization than did respondents who had not been burglary victims.

Creechan, Hartnagel and Silverman (1978) however, reported that, in their survey of Edmonton area residents, victims were more likely than were non-victims to view misbehaving juveniles as a problem, and were less likely to view the city as safe and to be satisfied with their personal safety. Similarly, Baumer's (1978) review of unpublished studies suggests that existing data support the contention that indirect as well as direct personal experience with crime is an important determinant of perception.

Thus, the exact nature of the relationship between experience with crime and public perceptions of crime has yet to be adequately specified. The effects of personal experience with serious crime on personal perception would seem to require little in the way of explanation. What is problematic, however, is the role which may be attributed to the majority of victimization experiences which are of a less serious nature.

The present research will suggest the possibility that the effects of personal experience upon perceptions of crime may be dependent upon the contextual variable of community. This hypothesis conceptualizes personal experiences with crime as sensitizing influences rather than as direct effects. In other words, being victimized may alert community residents to the issue of crime such that crime information becomes more salient. As a consequence, community residents may become sensitive to previously unnoticed evidence of the "crime problem". The extent to which this sensitivity results in altered perceptions will in large part depend upon the nature and the amount of crime-related information available.

3. length of residency. To-date, criminologists have not focused attention upon residency variables as they relate to perceptions of crime. Thre is reason to suggest that such variables may, in fact, exert influence in this regard but that the level of influence may be dependent upon the wider social context. For instance, a long period of residency in a city which is undergoing rapid social change or which has an increasing rate of crime may lead residents to compare a stable and safe past with an unstable and unsafe present. Thus, the relationships involving length of residency and perceptions of crime must be seen as dependent upon the larger social context.

4. resentment of social change. A number of writers have suggested the possibility of interesting theoretical and empirical relationships involving perceptions of crime and resentment of social change (Furstenberg, 1971; Lotz, 1979; Van Dijk, 1978). In general, the argument has been made that to some extent, at least, such resentment is displaced with respect to perceptions of crime. It may be, however, that resentment to social change is related to real changes occurring in the environment. If such resentment does in fact have a basis in objective environmental conditions, then the nature of the social environment becomes relevant. The relationship between resentment of social change and perceptions of crime may involve

a threshold effect such that the strength of the relationship between these variables is affected by the larger environmental setting.

In general, these summaries suggest two conclusions. First, with the possible exception of resentment to social change, overall relationships between secondary status characteristics and the dependent variables may be expected to be quite weak. Second, for reasons unique to each secondary status characteristic, the relationships involving these characteristics and perceptions of crime may be affected by the larger social context. Specifically, the following research hypotheses may be suggested:

h4a: The secondary status characteristics relating to media behaviour, victimization and length of residency in city and neighbourhood will be unrelated to perceptions of crime in the overall sample.

h4b: The secondary status characteristic of resentment to social change will be significantly related to perceptions of crime in the overall sample.

h5: The relationships involving secondary status characteristics and perceptions of crime will be differentially affected by the larger social context.

Data bearing upon these hypotheses are presented in Chapter 9.

Summary

On the whole, attempts to relate public perceptions of crime to the status and role characteristics of social actors have been valuable in that they have suggested a number of important relationships in this regard. However, these studies have often failed to detect what might be the rather subtle nature of these relationships. As a result, the level of theoretical explanation remains low.

In this chapter, a number of suggestions have been put forth regarding the more precise nature of the relationships between the characteristics of social actors and their perceptions of crime. Two major types of status characteristics have been distinguished. With respect to each type, a general framework of theoretical and empirical understanding has been suggested. In addition, a number of specific hypotheses, relating these status characteristics to perceptions of crime, have been advanced.

To suggest a conceptualization of public perceptions of crime in role and status terms does not exclude the importance of other kinds of variables. Most notably in this regard, the present chapter has emphasized the role of social context as a variable affecting public perceptions of crime. The suggested hypotheses, as well as several of the studies reviewed above indicate the importance of such contextual variables.

Furstenberg found, for instance, that the fear of crime varied much more between high and low crime rate areas in Baltimore than it did within such areas. Block and Long's reanalysis of crime commission data revealed that subjective evaluations of personal victimization were in fact related to objective crime levels--a community characteristic. Clemente and Kleinman found that five traditional socio-demographic variables were not extremely useful in predicting the fear of crime. Of these five variables, however, the second best predictor was community size--a social system rather than an individual property. Jaycox's (1978) analysis of public perceptions of crime among the elderly concluded that neighbourhood as an environmental entity exerted an independent influence upon perception. Finally, Hindelang, Garafolo and Gottfredson (1978) also interpreted some of their data as supporting the importance of residential variables. The next chapter is concerned with a more complete examination of the relationship between community characteristics and perceptions of crime.

FOOTNOTES

1. With respect to the differences regarding fear indicators, Lotz states:

> Furstenberg measured fear in terms of perceived chances of victimization, but this is atypical; other research shows that the association between fear (using conventional indicators) and perceived risk is negligible... Furthermore, fear is usually thought to refer to feelings of terror, dread, or alarm, not to predictions. Hence a less cognitive measure than Furstenberg used seems preferable. Therefore, the item employed in this study is "How much would you say you fear crime in your neighborhood?" (Respondents could choose from three levels) (1979: 246).

2. A number of the studies reviewed in this chapter present data relating to race as well as socioeconomic status. To some extent, of course, race may be interpreted as a correlate of socioeconomic status--particularly within the context of American society.

CHAPTER 4

THE DETERMINANTS OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: COMMUNITY DIMENSIONS

Introduction

Several of the studies reviewed in the last chapter implied the possibility of interesting relationships between perceptions of crime and certain objective characteristics of the environments within which people live. This interpretation of perceptions, as community phenomena, suggests that in some sense "community" or "city" or "environment" exerts an influence on public perceptions of crime, independent of the individual attributes of the residents who inhabit the locale. There are of course many reasons to suspect such a relationship. Skogan and Klecka, for instance, write:

> Cities have different histories. Current opinion in a community in part reflects the past, including the effects of previous crime waves, sensational events and long-run trends which have led up to the current state of affairs. Cities are also characterized by their cultures or the norms, expectations and usual activities of their citizens (1977: 54).

This chapter will attempt to explore, in greater detail, the influence of environmental variables as they affect public perceptions of crime. More specifically, it will review those studies which discuss or imply such a relationship. The chapter will end with a discussion of some possible ways in which the arguments for environmental effects might be expanded in both a theoretical and empirical sense.

Public Perceptions of Crime and Social Context

To attempt to investigate the possible relationships, which might exist between perceptions of crime and the objective nature of the environment, is to employ an approach which has been widely used in urban sociology. The early writing of Louis Wirth (1969), for instance, suggested that the size, density and heterogeneity of cities produce attitudinal and behavioural effects which he conceptualized as the "urban way of life". In essence, Wirth argued that a limited number of exogenous variables exert behavioural effects, independent of the characteristics of the urban residents. More recent and more sophisticated examples of such an approach in urban sociology may be found in the work of Fischer (1975), Tallman and Morgner (1970) and Martin (1956). Fischer, for instance investigated the relationship between urban residence and deviation from traditional values. His secondary analysis of four national surveys, containing items indexing traditionalism, indicated that urban residence *per se* had small but real effects upon adherence to traditional values. In other words, urban-rural variation in individual characteristics did not completely explain the association between urbanism and deviance. By way of interpreting these findings, Fischer did not argue in a manner consistent with Wirth, that urban life generates anomie and social disorganization. Rather, his theoretical interpretation involved the argument that urban life makes more likely the development and consequent influence of innovative urban subcultures.

Many critics have questioned the value of deterministic models of environmental effects. Most notably, the urban sociologist Gans (1968: 1970), has argued that such environmental effects may be better explained by the age and social class characteristics of the community residents, than by the objective characteristics of the community itself.[1] Despite such criticism, however, there are valid theoretical and empirical reasons for investigating the possibility of interrelationships between subjective perceptions of crime and objective characteristics of place of residence in that criminological and non-criminological research suggest such relationships.[2]

Two studies may be mentioned which demonstrate the applicability of such an approach to the answering of questions other than those posed by the criminologist. Bogart and Hutchinson (1978) addressed the question of why various groups in society disagree about the causes of social problems. As the authors note, past research has distinguished individualistic and structural causes, in this regard, and has argued that each type of attribution is associated with particular types of individuals. Middle income Protestants, for instance, are seen as more apt to attribute such problems to personal weakness and the failures of the poor, while low income blacks tend to see poverty as the product of social structural forces, such as economic exploitation and racial discrimination. Bogart and Hutchinson, however, analyzed data from a community survey which demonstrated that in addition to such background characteristics as race, income and education, community of residence was a critical variable in influencing opinions about the causes of social problems. The theoretical framework employed by the authors argued that community of residence is best viewed as an intermediary socializing mechanism, through which individuals perceive the impact of social change and evaluate the effects of these changes. According to Bogart and Hutchinson:

> Even when the effects of several other powerful explanatory variables known to affect attitudes towards social issues are taken into account, the community of residence still has a strong and independent effect on individual attitudes. In other words, substantive differences are found in the attitudes of both blacks and whites in different parts of the community--differences which may be explained only by reference to the theory of the community as a moral order and not to the social background characteristics of individual respondents (1978: 109).

Schuman and Gruenberg (1970) investigated the effects of "city" as a variable upon a wide variety of attitudes. Using probability samples selected from 15 American cities, the researchers comprehensively analyzed the manner in which racial, urban and certain other attitudes seemed to be influenced by respondents' city of residence. The initial analysis showed that city of residence accounted for significant proportions of variance in a wide range of attitudes. In terms of the variance explained, city of residence was as important as the five background characteristics of age, sex, education, income, and occupation. As might be expected, attitudes best explained by city seemed to be those with some urban content and especially those that involved individual perceptions of the immediate social environment. The outcomes were similar for black and white respondents and for some specific attitudes, there was a surprising similarity in the ranking of cities across race. The conclusions reached by Schuman and Gruenberg are in accord with those advanced by Bogart and Hutchinson:

> This paper set out to ascertain whether the cities in which Americans live produce distinctive effects upon citizens' attitudes, experiences and perceptions. We believe we have shown this to be so and that we have also begun to identify some of these connections. They do not appear to be simple reflections of differences among cities in demographic composition although there are important relations to more standard demographic and ecological indices. One can usefully explore antecedent factors which shape cities but it is the outcome of this process --cities as perceptually "real"-- that in turn shapes attitudes (1970: 255).

With respect to public perceptions of crime specifically, there have only been a limited number of studies which have attempted to ascertain the nature of the relationships which might exist between these perceptions and the dimensions of wider environments. And, those studies which have indicated an interest in environmental dimensions of the perception issue have generally tended to restrict attention to a single community, rather than investigating variation in perception across communities.

Dinitz (1973), for instance, focused upon the crime problem in a small town called Lincoln, (population 11,250) located in west central Ohio. The citizens of Lincoln boasted of their community as a "nice quiet neighborly place where everyone knows and speaks to everyone else". The bulk of the population was white and constituted, according to Dinitz, a largely homogeneous group, adhering to a similar set of norms and values.

Generally, the residents of Lincoln reported little fear of crime. Considering it unlikely that they would be held up or attacked, the townspeople felt very safe going anywhere they wanted in the community at any time of day or night. Few residents or businesses reported taking any special precautions to protect themselves against crime. In fact, when respondents were asked what they considered to be the major crime problem, over 10% volunteered the opinion that there was little or no crime in Lincoln. Those who did specify a crime problem most often cited vandalism, juvenile delinquency, larceny, robbery, breaking and entering and drugs.

According to Dinitz, the homogeneity of values, which prescribed friendliness and reasonableness and, which proscribed conflict, affected the manner in which criminal offenders were defined in Lincoln. Law breakers were not generally defined as "revolutionaries" or "hard core criminals" but as "boys who will be boys" or as "good people who just got into a little scrape". Even more significant is the fact that offenders were generally known personally to other members of the community as friends, associates or even kin. Thus:

> the "throw the book at them" or "lock them up and throw away the key" approaches urged so passionately by the fearful and God-fearing in urban and suburban America are deemed neither necessary nor desirable (1973: 14).

While there was an almost carefree absence of fear at home, the author states that there was, in Lincoln, a foreboding, almost ominous fear of the outside world. This was suggested, in part, by the fact that the majority of respondents clearly distinguished the safety of their own community from other larger, more distant metropolitan areas. Furthermore, when asked which crimes in United States concerned them most, respondents mentioned, in order of frequency, drug use, murder and a mixed collection of acts including political crimes, campus unrest, disrespect for law and order, riots and malicious destruction of property. Further, their opinions of what should be done to combat these crimes on the national scene could be summarized as a "get tough, hard nosed posture". According to Dinitz, the townspeople were afraid that it was only a matter of time before those serious troubles came to Lincoln.

In contrast to the research setting of Lincoln, Kleinman and David (1973) investigated perceptions of crime in a high-crime rate inner city area. A sample of residents in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of New York City were interviewed in an attempt to determine community members' experience with, and perceptions of crime. The perception measures were designed to tap cognitive, rather than affective perceptions of crime in the area.

The research revealed a number of interesting relationships. Men and women were equally likely to perceive the crime rate as high. With respect to socioeconomic status, a higher proportion of those of high, than of medium or low socioeconomic status tended to perceive the crime rate as high. Among black and white respondents, larger proportions of older than younger residents perceived crime as high but, there was no difference in perception by age among British West Indian and Puerto Rican residents. Those respondents who had been victimized were more likely to perceive crime as high among all race-ethnic groups except whites.

Kleinman and David also attempted to determine what relationships, if any, existed between perceptions of crime and the variables of length of residence and number of social contacts in the area. Long-term residents were more likely to perceive crime in the area as high, even when the greater rate of victimization for this group was held constant. With respect to the variable of number of social contacts on the area, the results were inconsistent across racial groups. Among blacks, those who attended church frequently (a large proportion of whom were probably women) and those who had many relatives in the area were apt to perceive crime as high. It was suggested that these churchgoing black women may have used their weekly contacts to exchange thoughts on crime and thus reinforce each others' perceptions of a high level of crime. Among whites, however, a reverse pattern was found. Whites who attended church and had many relatives in the area were more likely to perceive crime in the area as low than whites who didn't attend church or who had few social contacts in the area. Kleinman and David suggested that whites generally formed an isolated minority in this largely black community and that those whites who had close family and religious ties in the area might have felt more secure than whites in general and therefore perceived lower levels of crime.

The studies undertaken by Dinitz and Kleinman and David are enlightening but it is clear that a more systematic approach to understanding how place of residence might affect perceptions of crime would involve an examination of the manner in which perceptions of crime vary across social settings, rather than across categories of actors within social settings.

A cross-community study was conducted by Boggs, (1971) who examined urban, suburban and rural orientations to crime and social control. A series of questions about crime and deterrence was asked of a sample of adults as part of a statewide amalgam study conducted in Missouri, in the spring of 1968 by the University of Missouri Public Opinion Survey Unit. Eight hundred and forty-two respondents were grouped according to their place of residence yielding 270 central city residents, 212 suburban residents and 360 small town or rural residents.

The majority of central city residents felt that a serious crime was likely to happen in their neighbourhoods and that it was equally likely to be a personal crime as a property offense. The majority of suburban and rural residents, on the other hand, felt that the occurrence of any serious crime in their neighbourhoods was unlikely, although suburban residents felt less sure about residential burglary and larceny. Contrary to what might be expected, rural residents considered crime occurrence to be more likely in their neighbourhoods than did suburban residents.

In attempting to explain these inter-community differences, Boggs examined not community characteristics, but rather differences in individual behaviour. She writes, for instance:

> Since suburbs typically contain more middle class populations than either the central city or rural areas, suburbanites may be exposed to more television, newspapers, magazines, movies, etc. and react vicariously to the threat of crime (1971: 327).

Since Boggs was primarily interested in the differential orientation regarding social control, the issue of differential perceptions is not intensively examined.

Gibbons et al (1972) examined perceptions of San Francisco and Portland residents regarding crime, corrections and the courts. The San Francisco residents perceived the crime problem to be worse in their state than in Oregon or Washington and, many of them perceived crime in California to be as marked as "in the east". The Portland residents asserted that their state was less ridden with crime than California or the east. Gibbons argued that Portland citizens were probably fairly accurate in their view that they lived in a less crime-filled city than San Francisco residents. Responses to all personal safety items showed Portland citizens to be somewhat less fearful of being robbed or victimized in their own neighbourhoods or of being a victim of a crime somewhere in the larger community. It appears, however, that the authors were primarily interested in describing rather than explaining these inter-community differences.

Christensen and Dillman (1974) employed a path analytic technique in order to construct a causal model concerning awareness of the crime problem, and willingness to do something about the problem. The analysis was based upon a random statewide sample of heads of households in Washington state. The study was part of a larger analysis of public values and the relationship of these values to the allocation of tax dollars.

The model suggested that personal characteristics did not greatly affect awareness of the law and order problem. Both young and old, conservatives and liberals, those who identified with their communities and those who wanted to move, and those of high and low socioeconomic class were equally aware of the seriousness of crime in their communities. And, consistent with what was said in the last chapter, exposure to mass media appeared to be relatively unimportant in explaining awareness. The model did suggest, however, that city size was, by far, the most important variable in explaining awareness of the crime problem.

McPherson's (1978) analysis of data collected by the Minnesota Crime Prevention Project, further supports the importance of a relationship between objective features of the social environment and public perceptions of crime. These data indicate that citizen perception of the seriousness of selected crimes are related to the actual reported crime rates for burglary, personal robbery, purse snatching/pickpocketing, stranger-to-stranger assault and sexual assault. In addition, the analysis suggests that individuals have accurate perceptions of and are fearful in proportion to crime rates for crimes against the person, such as robbery, assault and sexual assault. In general, McPherson concludes that perceptions are accurate at the local level for crimes likely to generate fear and, that citizen estimates of victimization are related to actual victimization rates.

To date, the most systematic investigation of inter-community perceptions of crime and how these perceptions may be related to the nature of the community itself, is found in the work of John Conklin (1975). Conklin investigated perceptions of and reactions to crime in two Massachusetts communities - the high crime rate area of "Port City" and the low crime rate area of "Belleville". The research revealed that residents of Port City tended to perceive more crime and to perceive more serious crime than did the Belleville residents. According to Conklin, the inter-community differences with respect to perceptions of crime were much more important than the intra-community differences. In other words, perceptions of crime within each community were not affected very much by the personal characteristics of the respondents. The fact that sex, age, ethnicity, religion, education, income, occupational prestige self-designated social class and father's occupation had relatively small effects on perceptions of crime led Conklin to conclude that community, rather than individual characteristics are important in attempting to understand differentials in perception.

By way of explanation, Conklin argues that each community is characterized by a unique criminal environment and that:

> it is the criminal environment, within which people live, rather than their personal background traits, which affects the way they perceive local crime rates (1975: 80).

Conklin conceptualizes this criminal environment in terms of the myths, legends, ideas and views about crime in a given social setting. The criminal environment is input from:

1. the mass media
2. statements by politicians
3. observations of the activities of local police
4. conversations with friends
5. stories by victims
6. first-hand observations of crime and criminality
7. personal victimization

If public perceptions of crime are to be understood as community phenomena, then the concept of the criminal environment would appear to be extremely useful. It is, in a sense, a particularistic cultural subset relating to crime and criminals. Alternatively, the criminal environment may be conceptualized as an ongoing message system from which, and to which, community members extract and supply information.

A similar concept is suggested by Quinney's discussion of criminal conceptions. He writes:

> Wherever the concept of crime exists, images are communicated in society about the meaning of crime, the nature of crime and the relationship of crime to the social order. Criminal conceptions are thus constructed and diffused throughout society by various means of communication (1970: 277).

Whereas Quinney's concern is with the construction and diffusion of criminal conceptions at the level of the total society, Conklin's criminal environment is a concept which is community-specific. As a heuristic device, it aids in the understanding of community differentials in the perception of crime, and the relationship of these perceptions to supra-individual factors.

Some notion of what may be termed a criminal environment is implicit in many of the studies which have been reviewed here. Dinitz, for instance suggested that Lincoln residents conceptualized crime in a manner which was both reflective of and supportive of a specific homogeneous value structure. Furstenberg argued that the flow of neighbourhood information was an important variable in understanding differences in neighbourhood levels of fear and suggested that:

> Just as people learn how afraid to be from features of the neighbourhood, their fear in turn affects the social landscape in which they live (1971: 608).

Finally, Kleinman and David argued that differential patterns of communication and information exchange may aid in explaining black-white differences in cognitive perceptions of crime in a ghetto community.

Despite the valuable sociological nature of Conklin's analysis, it is not without criticism. It may be argued that his conceptualization of a criminal environment lacks rigor, and, to an extent, this criticism is valid. For instance, the seven components which Conklin claims determine the nature of this environment are actually of two types. The mass media, statements by politicians, stories by victims and conversations with friends are vicarious in nature in that they provide second-hand information about crime and criminals. Observations of local police, first-hand observations of crime and criminals and personal victimization, on the other hand, are more direct sources of information about crimes and criminals. Conklin fails to make this general distinction and thus does not consider the relative theoretical importance of vicarious versus personal sources with respect to the concept of the criminal environment. It might also be argued that these sources of input are in a sense redundant, in that they are not mutually exclusive. Stories by victims, statements by politicians and even observations of local police are not separate from the mass media as sources of input, in that the former are often filtered through the latter.

There is, however, a far more serious criticism of Conklin's analysis in general and his conceptualization of a criminal environment in particular. Specifically, Conklin fails to consider the wider structural context of the criminal environment and the degree to which the wider context is dynamic in nature. Conklin associates differences in criminal environments with differences in objective rates of crime and, his evidence does indicate that criminal perceptions are in fact related to objective risk. Yet, it can be argued that communities with similar objective rates of crime may be characterized by quite different criminal environments, depending upon the presence or absence of other social organizational characteristics. These characteristics might include the rate of growth of the community, the degree of social heterogeneity and the degree to which identifiable groups within the community disproportionately contribute to rates of crime. Such variables, it can be argued, would affect the myths, legends, ideas and views about crime in a given social setting to the extent that communities with similar objective levels of crime, may be characterized by quite different criminal environments and thus dissimilar community perceptions.

Conklin's research dealt with two communities--Port City and Belleville. Both communities were relatively homogeneous and neither was experiencing rapid or sudden growth. The primary, relevant criterion, according to which these communities might be distinguished, was the objective level of crime. Conklin implicitly argued that in Port City the greater intensity of the concern with and fear of crime were adjustments to this higher objective rate; and this adjustment, Conklin argues, was maladaptive, to the extent that it weakened informal social control, thereby producing an environment conducive to even higher rates of criminality.

According to Conklin, these community differentials in perception (and perceptual consequences) are related to an objective community feature--the crime rate. By way of further explanation, Conklin suggests that a threshold effect may be operating. In other words, perceptions of crime become exaggerated and have negative effects on community only when the actual crime rate of the community passes a certain critical level. By failing to place the criminal environment within a sufficiently broad context, Conklin overlooks the fact that a given climate of concern and worry may be a reaction to objective community characteristics, other than, though not necessarily excluding the rate of crime. A number of the studies reviewed in the previous chapter suggested the extent to which perceptions of crime may be affected by respondents perceptions of other aspects of their social environments. Of particular interest, in this regard, is the manner in which respondents' perceptions of crime are related to perceptions of changing social conditions. Both Furstenberg (1971) and Lotz (1979) have argued that concern with crime could possibly be interpreted as a displacement of a negative sentiment towards changing social conditions. Similarly, Van Dijk (1978) suggested that both fear of and concern with crime may be related to an aversion to the lifestyle of the younger generation, as well as to a dislike of certain political orientations. Van Dijk's analysis of perception of crime data collected in the Netherlands concluded that:

> the available data do indicate that much fear of crime is dependent on social factors which lay outside the realities of crime and crime control (1978: 272).

These findings are consistent with the argument originally made by Wilson (1975) and later by Garafolo and Laub (1978) that the unease generated by crime is only an obvious manifestation of a more generalized unease regarding community. In this respect, Garafolo and Laub noted that:

> the fear of actual criminal victimization is inseparable from the unease generated by other more minor forms of deviance and that the sum of these anxieties is the basis for the concern with community (1978: 250).

It is of course highly unlikely that social actors divide the world up into the same categories as do academic criminologists. Thus, perceptions of crime may be conceptualized as, to some extent at least, specific manifestations of more generalized concern. This reasoning would suggest then, that perceptions of crime are likely to be influenced by a number of dynamic and structural features of the social environment.

For these reasons, it may be advantageous to reconsider the threshold effect, suggested by Conklin, in terms of the wider social organizational structure of the social environment. In this sense, community perceptions of crime may be related to the concept of community toleration as discussed by Lemert (1951), Morris (1966), Van Vechten (1940) and Wilkins (1965). According to these writers, community perceptions of crime might be conceptualized in terms of a tolerance quotient expressed as:

$$\frac{\text{rate of objective behaviour}}{\text{community tolerance of that behaviour}}$$

This expression can not truly be stated in quantitative terms given that different quantities are involved in the numerator and the denominator. It is, however, heuristically useful. It suggests that deviance is defined as problematical when the objective rate of behaviour increases such that it outstrips tolerance or, when the level of tolerance of that behaviour is low vis a vis a particular objective level. Conklin's analysis suggests the former case. As one moves from Belleville to Port City, the objective crime rate increases such that it outstrips the ability of community to tolerate that behaviour. The result of this threshold effect is to make crime salient. This salience is evidenced by the tendency on the part of Port City residents to perceive more crime and to perceive more serious crime than the residents of Belleville.

There is, however, another theoretical possibility. The tolerance quotient of communities may differ with respect to the denominator rather than with respect to the numerator. In other words, communities with similar objective levels of crime may exhibit differences in community perceptions because of differentials in community tolerance (the denominator) rather than the objective rate of crime (the numerator).

With this in mind, the central task then becomes to uncover the factors which might affect this level of tolerance. It is suggested that just as community perceptions of crime may be related to the objective rate of behaviour so they may be related to other community characteristics which lessen tolerance of that behaviour. Given these considerations, several theoretical formulations may be suggested:

1. Perceptions of crime will be affected by objective crime levels. This is of course merely a restatement of the findings of Block and Long and Conklin, but it is stated here for the sake of completeness. Additionally, it is a statement which should be made with qualification; if communities are similar with respect to other relevant variables, then perceptions of crime will be related to objective crime levels.

By way of justifying this hypothesis, it may be pointed out that community residents are not as myopic as media determinists have made them out to be. Their perception of social reality is not shaped solely by vicarious mass media experience; rather, their social environments provide them with numerous cues. In this regard, Furstenberg's analysis of public perceptions of crime in Baltimore suggested that:

> people generally have a fairly accurate notion of the amount of crime in their neighbourhoods....It is beyond the scope of this analysis to go into how residents develop their impressions of the amount of crime in their neighbourhoods. There is no reason to believe, however, that this process is either very subtle or very obscure. People listen to police sirens, talk to their neighbours and read the morning newspaper. From the Harris poll data, it is clear that firsthand knowledge of events in the neighbourhood is especially important (1971: 608).

A somewhat different type of study, by Roshier (1973), is also relevant in this regard. The research involved an examination of the relationships between official rates of crime, attitudes to crime and media presentations of crime. His overall finding was that public perceptions of crime did not seem to be influenced by press presentations. Rather, such perceptions were surprisingly close to the "official picture". He found that respondents' ranking of the relative frequency of certain crimes correlated with relative frequencies as revealed in the official statistics, rather than in the press presentations. And, when there was a deviation from that ranking, it tended to not be in the direction predicted by press presentations. He concluded that there seemed to be very little evidence of any direct effect of newspapers on reader's views.

A more general study by Hubbard et al (1975), reached essentially the same conclusions. The researchers found that respondents' ranking of the frequency of a number of social problems, including crime, was generally more closely related to the rank order as revealed in agency records than the rank order revealed by frequency of media exposure.

Since community respondents are in fact exposed to many information channels, it is likely that their perceptions of crime will bear some relationship to the objective levels of that behaviour.

2. Perceptions of crime will be affected by the instability of objective crime levels. In other words, more intense perceptions of crime will be expected in environments characterized by changing rates of crime than in environments characterized by static rates--even if the static rates are higher. Such a relationship is suggested by both Conklin and Block and Long.

Changing rates of crime may lead community residents to contrast a rather dangerous present with a relatively safe past. As a consequence, anxiety related to crime may be accentuated. With respect to the terms of reference used earlier, the increase in the objective level of crime may outstrip the ability, or the willingness of the community to tolerate that behaviour. It may be that increases in highly visible or well publicized crimes leads community residents to become sensitized to other types of crime as well.

Kleinman and David's analysis of perceptions of crime in a ghetto community further supports the notion that changing rates of crime affect perceptions. Their research revealed that long-term residents of the Bedford-Stuyvesant area were more likely to perceive crime rates as high than were residents who had lived there for shorter periods of time. This relationship persisted even when the greater rate of victimization for long-time residents was held constant. It may be that long-time residents witnessed increases in the crime rates over time and that the tendency to contrast the dangerous present with the safer past resulted in a tendency to view the crime rate as high.

Points 1 and 2 above deal with the manner in which changes in the numerator of the tolerance quotient might affect perceptions of crime. Point 3, 4, 5 and 6 however, are concerned primarily with the manner in which the denominator (community toleration) might be affected independent of changes in the objective rate of behaviour.

3. Perceptions of crime will be affected by increases in the population size of community. In discussing the effects which changes in population size may have upon community perceptions of crime, it is necessary to distinguish between direct and indirect effects. The indirect effects may be brought about by changes in the objective levels of crime which may themselves be the result of such population increases. Such changes are suggested by points 1 and 2 above.

It is, however, the direct effects of population increase upon perception, which are of interest here. Mention has already been made of the tendency on the part of community residents to conceptualize the criminal as an outsider (Dow, 1967). The U.S. President's Crime Commission, in its final report, suggested that fear of crime is largely "fear of the stranger". Both Klapp (1962) and Quinney (1970) have written about the "villainous stranger" as a social type populating the world of crime. As a community's population grows and as members of the public perceive that growth, they may react adversely to the dramatic increase in the number of strangers and outsiders.

Studies discussed earlier suggest such a relationship. Dinitz's investigation of crime in the town of Lincoln indicated that, although residents defined offenders within their community as "good people who just got into scrapes":

> the townspeople are afraid that it is only a matter of time before trouble comes. Note that trouble comes; the citizens do not define trouble as ever starting there...."real problems" are caused by outsiders and the obvious solution therefore is to keep outsiders out (1973: 17).

In addition, Furstenberg's reanalysis of the Baltimore data suggested that for some segments of the population, concern with the problem of crime may be a displacement for a more deeply held resentment of social change. Population growth, particularly if the growth is rapid would no doubt bring with it a number of other changes in community structure. If social change is in fact resented by community members, then such resentment should, to some degree, displace itself into exaggerated perceptions of crime in the community.

4. Perceptions of crime will be affected by the level of social heterogeneity. Again, Furstenberg's discussion of perception of crime in Baltimore concluded that concern with crime was

most highly concentrated among whites, antagonistic to racial reform. Other studies, which have been reviewed here, also suggest such an hypothesis. A community which is highly homogeneous with respect to, for instance, age and racial variables will probably exhibit less of a tendency to define a crime problem in terms of a clearly identifiable group of "outsiders" who reside within the community. The high level of cultural homogeneity in Lincoln, for instance, led to the definition of offenders as insiders who got into trouble, rather than as outsiders.

It is probable that perceptions of crime are not only related to the volume of crime, but also to whom it is thought is committing the crime. In communities where there exist clearly definable groups, who are thought to disproportionately contribute to the rate of crime, public anxiety regarding crime may be high, even when the objective rate of that behaviour is relatively low.

With respect to point 3 above, reference was made to the tendency on the part of community residents to conceptualize crime in terms of the stranger or the outsider. It was suggested that the criminal stereotype may be compounded by the sterotype of the newly arriving urban immigrant. It may also be suggested that racial, ethnic or age stereotypes may likewise reinforce the criminal stereotype, thereby accentuating feelings of fear of crime and fear of the stranger. This tendency to attribute crime in the community to a specific group was suggested by Boggs (1971) who found that urban residents thought of crime in their neighbourhoods as the work of "troublemakers" such as "blacks or teenagers". Poveda's (1972) analysis of perceptions of crime in Delta City, concluded that fear of crime was in reality fear of the community's youth.

5. Perceptions of crime will be affected by community size. The importance of the community size variable has already been suggested by the multivariate analysis undertaken by Clemente and Kleinman. Yet, its direct effects is difficult to assess. The indirect effects of community size are no doubt, in some part at least an expression of objective crime level and social heterogeneity.

More directly, it may be argued that community size is an indicator of anonymity and social distance between criminal offenders and the public-at-large. Cities, as opposed to towns or villages are likely to be characterized by social control agencies which are of a highly formalized nature. This fact, combined with the greater anonymity of urban life may lead to the criminal offender being defined in very specific, as opposed to very diffuse, terms. The specificity of the criminal role may lead to a highly sterotyped conceptualization of the criminal as criminal and, the criminal as outsider.

In addition, large communities, by virtue of their size will produce a larger pool of criminal events to be discussed by the media and the public-at-large. Since the general public and the media rarely conceptualize the prevalence or incidence of criminality in terms of a ratio to population base, the fact that there is simply more crime, may present an unbalanced picture of the amount of criminality in the community.

6. Public perceptions of crime will be affected by the presence of physical indicators of social disorganization. There is some evidence to suggest that the public's perception of crime will be affected by highly visible signs of what members of the public regard as disorderly and disreputable behaviour. Such "signs of incivility" (Baumer, 1978) may take many forms. Dilapidated housing, dingy and unkept apartment complexes and other signs of urban blight may signal to many people the presence of a "crime problem". This, of course, is not to say that there is a crime problem in the sense of real increases in, or unusually high levels of, serious crime. It is only to suggest that perceptions of crime may be heightened by such conditions.

The reasoning which would suggest this hypothesis has already been outlined. It is unrealistic to assume that members of the public isolate their perceptions of crime from their perceptions of other aspects of their social and physical environment. Highly visible signs of urban malaise may suggest to residents that such physical deterioration may be indicative of various forms of social deterioration. In effect, a more general anxiety with respect to the nature of community may specifically manifest itself in terms of a more specific anxiety with respect to crime.

In view of the material that has been reviewed thus far in this chapter, the following hypothesis may be proposed:

h6: The variable, social environment, will have independent explanatory power with respect to perceptions of crime.

This hypothesis flows from Conklin's original analysis which suggested that the criminal environments of communities uniquely determine the manner in which community residents come to perceive crime.

Building upon Conklin's contribution, however, it has also been argued that the criminal environment must be understood within the dynamic social organizational framework of the larger social setting. To this end, it is hypothesized that:

h7: The effect of social environment upon perceptions of crime results from the influence of numerous contextual characteristics associated with such environments.

These hypotheses are empirically assessed in Chapter 10.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has presented data which suggest the extent to which there are community dimensions to perceptions of crime. The theoretical and empirical nature of those social environmental influences has been outlined and specific hypotheses in this regard have been advanced.

Thus far the concept of social environment has been employed without a consideration of the operational definition of this term. The research discussed above has operationalized the notion of community or social environment in a number of ways. Furstenberg (1971) restricts his discussion to a consideration of differences between neighbourhoods. Bogart and Hutchinson (1978) are concerned with the analysis of natural areas. For Conklin (1975) the relevant distinction involves suburbs. As the literature of urban sociology indicates, terms such as community or social environment lack clear definitional bases.

For these reasons, research into the effects of social environmental characteristics upon the public's perceptions of crime invites a certain arbitrariness with respect to the way in which social area, community or social environment is conceptually and operationally defined. It may be that the relevant concerns in this regard are those which are social psychological in nature. In other words, community may only properly be delimited in terms of the social psychological definitions of social actors. For some individuals who never wander far from the immediate neighbourhood, community may be very narrowly defined in terms of this restricted spatial area. For others, for instance commuters who are employed in a section of the city quite far from their residences, the concept of community may have a considerably different meaning. Thus, the attempt to relate the objective characteristics of "census tracts", social areas and neighbourhoods to public perceptions of crime may obscure the nature of these more subtle social psychological dimensions.

To be sure, there are no easy solutions to the research problems. However, it would appear that a meaningful approach to understanding the relationship between public perceptions of crime and objective area characteristics might begin with an attempt to determine the manner in which members of the public define these areas. Through the techniques of survey research, it would be possible to determine the manner in which members of the public define, for instance, neighbourhood. Such definitions might be formulated in terms of, for example, shopping behaviour, neighbouring activities and visiting patterns. It would then be possible to group together those residents who similarly structure neighbourhood space. The objective features of these neighbourhoods could then be related to the perceptions of crime, of those residents who define these areas as meaningful.

Unfortunately, limitations in the present data set prevent such conceptual sophistication. More specifically, questionnaire items relating to respondents' definitions of neighbourhood or community were not included in the survey instrument. This situation arises not from an oversight, but from the fact that these data were collected for substantive purposes not directly related to present concerns.

The present research design, however, does allow respondents to be grouped according to their cities of residence. It is thus possible to assess the impact of city *as social environment* upon perceptions of crime. Additionally, it is possible to determine the degree to which a number of specific city characteristics (crime rate, population size, population increase) independently influence perceptions of crime. The results of this data analysis are presented in Chapter 10.

With respect to the considerations discussed above, the question may be raised as to whether or not the variable city, is particularly meaningful in this context. To be sure, such a conceptualization is less than ideal. However, inter-city comparisons may be justified on two grounds. First, city as an entity, most likely, does have some degree of meaning for respondents. For instance, the mass media report rates of crime, at the city level, rather than at the level of the neighbourhood or census tract. Similarly, police departments often launch city-wide appeals with respect to the issue of crime. It will thus be assumed that city is a meaningful object of orientation with respect to public perceptions of crime. A second justification of the analysis of inter-city differences concerns the fact that a number of items in the survey reported here, specifically asked respondents to report perceptions concerning their cities.

This chapter and the one which preceded it have suggested that the forces affecting public perceptions of crime are complex indeed. It has been argued that a number of social actor and social environmental characteristics independently, and in interaction produce and maintain differential levels of perception. In addition, an effort has been made to suggest conceptual, theoretical and methodological refinements. The next chapter takes up an issue which is related to, yet distinct from, those already discussed. Specifically, assuming that such differentials in perception exist, what consequences do they have for the lives of social actors and, for the social environments in which they live?

FOOTNOTES

[1] Popenoe summarizes the work of Gans by stating that:

> In emphasing this fundamental but often overlooked fact, Gans made two important sociological points; it is difficult to compare the effects of dissimilar residential environments when the people who reside in them are also very different; and the characteristics of the residents are more important than the characteristics of the environment in accounting for human behavior and social organization within any community (1977: 5).

The literature of urban sociology does not clearly favour one view over the other and both are based upon substantial empirical evidence (Greer, 1956; Fischer, 1975; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Martin, 1956; Reiss, 1970; Tallman and Morgner, 1970).

[2] Yet, assuming that community differential with respect to perception is proof of community effect, may be to commit sociologistic fallacy. Riley (1963) uses the concept of the sociologistic fallacy to refer to the methodological error which assumes that a group or wider social system property is necessary to the explanation of individual level correlations. To avoid such a fallacy, it is necessary to ensure that the group-level finding (community differences in perception) cannot be ascribed solely to the characteristics of the individuals. The problem may be solved through what is known as a structural analysis. (Riley, 1963). Such an analysis involves comparing similar status segments of the different communities in order to control for the structural effects of these extraneous variables.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AS PRODUCERS OF EFFECTS

Introduction

The concern of the discussion, thus far, has been with perceptions of crime as dependent variables. The argument has been made that in order to understand the factors which differentially affect these perceptions, it is necessary to investigate both the independent and interactive influences of social actor and social environmental characteristics.

There is, however, a number of questions which have not yet been addressed. Specifically, these questions concern the consequences which flow from such perceptions of crime. Like the study of the determinants of public perceptions, the study of their effects is lacking in both theoretical and methodological clarity.

The aim of the present chapter is to provide a detailed discussion of the salient social scientific issues relating to the consequences or effects of perceptions of crime. To this end, the relevant literature is critically discussed, and, some specific research hypotheses are proposed.

Public Perceptions of Crime and the Effects of Crime

Any attempt to understand the manner in which public perceptions of crime produce consequences, should begin with a more general discussion of the effects of crime *per se*. The most popular sociological position regarding this argument is that which was originally introduced by Durkheim. As is well known, Durkheim argued that it is erroneous to attempt to conceptualize crime as a pathology or unnecessary part of social life. In Rules of the Sociological Method he wrote that crime is; "a factor in public health, an integral part of all healthy societies" (1938: 67). According to Durkheim, crime functions to increase the solidarity of social groups by reaffirming the shared sentiments from which social life proceeds. In The Division of Labor, he argued that:

> crime brings together upright consciences and concentrates them. We have only to notice what happens, particularly in a small town when some moral scandal has just been committed. (People) stop each other on the street, they visit each other, they seek to come together to talk of the event and to wax indignant in common (1933: 102).

Granted, Durkheim's comments refer only to those societies which are characterized by a high degree of mechanical solidarity and only to those crimes which invite moral outrage. Still, his comments suggested a line of theoretical reasoning which was later taken up by a number of social theorists. Mead, for instance, wrote that:

> The criminal is responsible for a sense of solidarity aroused among those whose attitudes would be centered upon interests quite divergent from each other....The attitude of hostility towards the lawbreaker has the unique advantage of uniting all members of the community (1918: 557).

The functionalist nature of nonconformist conduct has more recently been discussed by conflict theorists and criminologists interested in the labelling process as that process relates to wider social structures. Coser's (1962) work, for instance, emphasized the functional nature of deviance, not to the exclusion of its dysfunctional nature, "but to indicate that the consideration of one over the other may result in a distorted analysis" (1962: 172). Dentler and Erikson (1959) investigated the functions of deviance in small groups and argued that deviance in groups is functional for the maintenance of social equilibrium. Similarly, Erikson's (1966) insightful analysis of reactions to deviance in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, attempted to illustrate how the production of deviance is a boundary maintaining mechanism which defines and sharpens collective self-perceptions.

Such theoretical statements by Durkheim and others may for present purposes be interpreted as statements about public perceptions of crime. While these authors are concerned with the effects of crime or the effects of deviance, it is necessary to consider perception as the variable which intervenes between crime or deviance on the one hand, and these reactions on the other. As has been argued, neither communities nor individuals respond to crime directly but rather to subjective definitions of the situation. This is not merely a truism but rather, a necessary complication which must be considered if the effects of crime issue is to be understood. If similar objective realities of crime are differentially defined by social actors, then it is logical to investigate the nature of the relationships existing between these perceptions and attitudinal and behavioural reactions. This comment does not deny considerations raised in the last chapter regarding the imperfect correspondence between the objective facts of crime and subjective perceptions of these facts. In any case, such subjective definitions do reflect a social reality of crime (Quinney, 1970) and must be considered as perceptually real.

There does not exist a great deal of empirical literature relating to the effects of perceptions of crime. In his analysis of public response to the televised Kefauver Hearings, Wiebe (1952) found that the crime hearings did in fact produce a sense of moral outrage among the citizenry who attended to these broadcasts. Social intercourse was stimulated to the extent that over 80% of the respondents interviewed stated that they had talked about the crime and corruption to at least one other person. Wiebe's approach is purely social psychological to the extent that he was not concerned with the relationship between their reactions on the one hand and the wider community on the other. And, although he does not address the Durkheimian proposition directly, his findings are consistent with that position.

Poveda (1972) takes a more sociological position in his analysis of reactions to crime in a small town. His approach involved the employment of a "natural history" model in the analysis of responses to youthful drug use and crime generally in Delta City, a small town (population 26,000) on the periphery of a large metropolitan area.

According to Poveda, the sudden realization that there was widespread drug use among youthful residents brought with it a vital blow to the myth of small town life in Delta City. For several months following this discovery, community action slowly mounted as concerned citizens began, and participated in various educational programs. For instance, a drug information center was opened to provide information to the public about the uses and effects of drugs. During this same period, the police department became much more aggressive in seeking out drug users.

According to Poveda, the discovery of youthful drug use brought with it a growing awareness of other local problems that were formerly not so apparent. Most of this concern became centered on a variety of criminal episodes that had occurred in the area. As a result:

> the numerous exposes of drug use, murders and rising crime in early 1968 culminated in 1969 in a city council meeting which turned out to be a near-vigilante meeting as citizens yelled for a "get tough" policy in Delta City. Almost 75 local residents were present at the meeting demanding that something be done about the local crime problem (1972: 152).

Poveda's analysis revealed that much of the expressed fear of crime in the streets was nothing more than the residents' thinly veiled fear of some of their own young people. Drug use and many crimes of violence came to be consistently identified with adolescents and the persistent "cruising" and "hanging out" at certain corners or parks, by some youths, became a source of much anxiety for adults.

The end result of these processes was a preoccupation with refining and enlarging the law-enforcement system. According to Poveda, public discussion in Delta City had avoided an examination of local social conditions, the social position of adolescents in the community and the relationship of Delta City to the larger society.

Earlier reference was made to the research of Conklin, which investigated perceptions of crime and reactions to crime in two Massachusetts communities. With respect to the effects question, Conklin concluded:

> Little of the material we have examined ...suggests that Durkheim was correct in arguing that crime brings together people and strengthens social bonds. Instead, crime produces insecurity, distrust and a negative view of the community. Although we lack conclusive evidence, crime also seems to reduce social interaction, as fear and suspicion drive people apart. This produces a disorganized community that is unable to exercise informal social control over deviant behavior (1975: 99).

According to Conklin, the correlation between a perception of crime scale and a safety scale was near zero in Belleville (the low crime rate area) but was moderate and statistically significant in Port City (the high crime rate area), suggesting that in the latter community, but not in the former, those who perceived more crime felt less safe. For Conklin, this finding suggested a threshold effect, such that a relationship between perception and safety emerges only when the objective crime rate passes a certain critical level. This threshold was also suggested by the fact that in Port City but not in Belleville a statistically significant relationship existed between the perception of crime scale and a scale intended to measure interpersonal trust. According to Conklin:

> There was less interpersonal trust in the high crime rate area than in the low crime rate area. In the suburb (Belleville) no relationship existed between trust and perception of crime or between trust and feelings of safety. However, in the high crime rate area (Port City) those who felt less trusting of others perceived more crime and felt less safe than those who were more trusting of others (1975: 90-91).

Conklin also found less positive affect for community among the Port City residents. In the low crime rate area, perceptions of crime, feelings of safety and trust were not related to affect for community. In Port City, however, the data revealed that those respondents who liked the community most also perceived the least amount of crime, felt the safest and were most likely to trust others.

Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garafolo (1978) used National Crime Survey data to investigate the hypothesis that crime-related anxiety leads people to limit their activities. The eight-city survey included an item which asked respondents to generally indicate whether or not they had changed or limited their behaviour because of crime. Slightly less than half of the respondents (46%) indicated that they had. A more detailed analysis of this item indicated that the pattern of responses showed variation across categories of respondents. Respondents who were female, black, older, or of lower socioeconomic status were more likely to indicate that they had changed their behaviour because of crime than were their male, white, younger or higher socioeconomic counterparts. Beyond this general item, regarding changes in behaviour as a reaction to crime, the NCS survey attempted to elicit more specific responses related to three more narrowly defined areas of behaviour; going out for entertainment, leaving and selecting neighbourhoods and shopping.

With respect to the first specific item, the data revealed that the fear of crime did not have major effects on the willingness of people to go out in the evening for entertainment. Although, as expected, a greater effect was found among certain respondent subgroups such as the elderly and victims. However, most of the variations, regarding going out in the evening for entertainment, appeared to be related to lifestyle differences rather than differences in the perception of crime.

Taken together, the items related to leaving and selecting neighbourhoods supported the notion that economic and social barriers and advantages were the primary factors involved in selecting a residence. The decision to leave a neighbourhood appeared to be contingent on such things as employment or marital status changes, or on the desire to attain a more suitable housing unit. Selection of a new neighbourhood was based on factors such as convenience of location and the availability and the cost of housing. The fear of crime did not appear to be a salient motivating factor in either aspect of mobility.

As might be expected regarding shopping, household respondents who said they usually did their nonfood shopping "downtown", virtually never mentioned "afraid of crime" as a reason --let alone a most important reason for that preference. White and black household respondents in this group suggested similar reasons as most important; more than 40% cited convenience, while almost 30% referred to the better selection of stores and merchandise "downtown". In general, the authors concluded:

> The most reasonable inference we can make from the eight city data as well as other sources is that for most people the behavioral effects of crime or the fear of crime appear more as subtle adjustments in behavior than as major shifts in what can be called behavioral policies". That is, rather than making substantial changes in what they do, people tend to change the ways in which they do things (1978: 224).

Hartnagel (1978) employed data from an amalgam survey conducted in Edmonton, Alberta to investigate possible effects of the perceptions of increases in violence crime and the fear of crime. Specifically, Hartnagel hypothesized:

1. perception of increased crime would be inversely related to neighbourhood cohesion, social activity and affect for community
2. the fear of crime would be inversely related to neighbourhood cohesion, social activity and affect for community
3. the relationships hypothesized in 1 and 2 above would be unaffected by personal experience with victimization.

With respect to the first hypothesis, the data analysis revealed only scant evidence in support of the hypothesized relationship. The relationships existing between perception of increases in crime and the dependent variables were either not significant at the zero-order level, or did not persist after controls were entered for the demographic characteristics of respondents. An interesting and somewhat paradoxical exception in this regard was a small but puzzling positive relationship between perception of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction.

The second hypothesis concerned affective rather than cognitive perceptions of crime, as an effort was made to relate fear of crime to neighbourhood cohesion, social activity and community affect. None of the coefficients involving neighbourhood cohesion and/or social activity reached statistical significance. However, the coefficients measuring the relation between fear of crime in the neighbourhood and in the city and affect for community were statistically significant, moderate in magnitude and in the predicted direction. These latter relationships withstood the introduction of social and demographic control variables.

The third hypothesis suggested that any relationships found between perception and fear of crime on the one hand and neighbourhood cohesion, social activity and community affect on the other, would be unaffected by the experience of criminal victimization. It was found that controlling for victimization variables did not significantly affect the magnitude of the correlations between the independent and dependent variables. In addition, the hierarchical test was employed to evaluate the contribution of each of three possible interaction effects (victim-perception of crime; victim-fear of crime in city; victim-fear of crime in neighbourhood) to the explained variation. None proved to be statistically significant.

Two additional studies which were discussed earlier also have relevance in the present context. Shotland et al (1979) utilized a quasi-experimental design to investigate the relationship between characteristics of crimes and victim-offender interactions, on the one hand, and potential behaviour change on the other. The findings of this research suggested that the potential for changes in crime prevention behaviour was greatest in the case of physical assault (as opposed to burglary) and in the case of crimes which occurred frequently.

Christensen and Dillman (1974) investigated awareness of the "law and order" problem and reported willingness to allocate tax funds towards the amelioration of that problem among a sample of Washington State residents. The results suggested that the elderly and those respondents who were politically conservative, were more likely to allocate tax funds than were their younger and more liberal counterparts. With respect to the variable of city size, the authors concluded:

> While large city residents are more aware of the crime problem, small town residents are more predisposed to act. Perhaps the problem seems more solvable in small towns. Large city residents might perceive the problem as hopeless and are less willing to allocate funds (1974: 223).

Overall however, the research indicated that awareness of the crime problem was the single best predictor of reported willingness to fund law and order programs.

Finally, Balkin (1979) attempted to propose a model for understanding the relationships between victimization rate, safety and the fear of crime. The author addressed his work to the apparent research anomaly concerning the fact that certain socio-demographic groups (e.g. women and the elderly) have high levels of fear of crime, yet low levels of criminal victimization. Balkin rejected arguments that this anomoly can be explained by reference to "faulty and irrational individual perceptions fostered by a lack of information or faulty information obtained through the mass media" (1979: 343). Rather, he argued that fear of crime is related to, and affects the actual incidence of crime. In order to understand these phenomena Balkin suggested that criminologists should be less concerned with traditional crime rates and victimization rates, as they are usually reported, since both types of measures fail to calibrate safety. This is because neither measure accounts for differing exposure to crime. Balkin employed the concept of the "real victimization rate" which he operationalized as the number of victimizations per exposure.

The model proposed by Balkin suggested that, it is this real victimization rate which must be understood in relation to the fear of crime. As the risk of victimization per exposure increases, so might the fear of crime. In response to this fear, some socio-demographic groups may decrease their levels of exposure, resulting in lower measured rates of victimization.

A preliminary test of the model was made using National Crime Survey data, on both victimization rates and attitudes. The analysis suggested that the fear of crime had higher correlations with victimization rates and, that exposure appeared to be negatively related to the fear of crime.

Perceptions of Crime and the Questions of Effects: The Present Research

It is apparent that the literature reviewed above is not unanimous with respect to the theoretical and empirical direction which it provides. The inconsistencies, in this regard, must, in part at least, be interpreted as a result of the research disinterest which has characterized this topic.

Generally, however, the recent research reported here lends little support to the functionalist interpretation of the effects of crime. More specifically, based on these research efforts, it is possible to, at least hypothesize, that cognitive and affective perceptions of crime are likely to be related to the following variables:

1. affect for community. It is expected that people who perceive higher levels of crime or that people who are most afraid of crime are more likely to have negative orientations towards their communities.
2. interpersonal trust. Again, theory and research may predict that as people come to perceive greater amounts of crime and as they become increasingly afraid of crime, they will be less trusting of others.
3. defensive behaviour. It is hypothesized that perceptions of crime will be related to the likelihood of taking crime prevention measures. In this regard, however, it is necessary to distinguish types of preventive measures. Measures such as the installation of special locks, or lights are intended to prevent victimization and may prove effective in achieving this end in the short-run. Such

target hardening (Conklin, 1975) is generally considered to be less socially destructive than avoidance behaviours such as refusing to leave one's home or neighbourhood, because of a fear of criminal assault. It is argued by some, however, that the long-range effects of both types of measures is to reduce informal social control and thus promote a general increase in the overall volume of crime.

In general, then, it is hypothesized that:

h8: Differential perceptions of crime will produce differential effects with respect to defensive behaviour, community affect and interpersonal trust.

While h8 predicts the general nature of the relationships involving perceptions of crime and the dependent variables, it is necessary to specify the manner in which such relationships may be differentially affected by the social environment. As discussed above, Conklin's research found that perceptions of crime were likely to produce effects in the high crime rate community of Port City, but not in the low crime rate community of Belleville. His interpretation of this finding suggested a threshold effect, such that perceptions of crime produce consequences only if the objective volume of crime reaches a critically high level. In this sense, the nature of the social environment becomes salient as a contextual variable, which may be conceptualized as affecting the nature of the relationship between perceptions of crime and the dependent variables.

While Conklin's contribution is valuable, in this regard, it may be somewhat simplistic. The argument was put forth in the last chapter that perceptions of crime may be affected by aspects of the social environment, other than, though not necessarily excluding, the level of crime. Given this logic, it is possible to hypothesize that the threshold effect involving perceptions of crime and the dependent variables, may be brought about by contextual settings characterized by a comparatively low level of crime. Social environmental contexts, which are for instance, undergoing a period of rapid social change, may produce a setting which maximizes the relationships between perceptions of crime and the dependent variables--even if the objective level of crime is relatively low. For present research purposes, then, it may be hypothesized that:

h9: The relationships involving perceptions of crime, on the one hand, and interpersonal trust, community affect and interpersonal trust on the other, will be differentially affected by the larger social environment.

It should be noted, that the present research is concerned only with those effects of perceptions of crime which are conceptually distinct from the perceptions themselves. This point may seem obvious, yet there has been a tendency in the literature to consider some types of perceptions of crime as the outcomes or consequences of other types of perceptions. For instance, fear of crime may be regarded as a consequence or outcome of cognitive perceptions of crime. With respect to Conklin's research, for example, it is difficult to conceptually distinguish between the independent variable of perception (which included the notion of concern) and the dependent variable of feelings of personal safety, which seems to be synonomous with fear. Such a line of reasoning is problematic in that, as stated, perceptions of crime are, no doubt, reciprocally related.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has raised a number of questions relating to the manner in which perceptions of crime may be conceptualized as producing consequences. The literature reviewed in this chapter provides little in the way of consistent theoretical or empirical direction. Despite such confusion, it has been hypothesized that three dependent variables--community affect, interpersonal trust and defensive behaviour--may be expected to be influenced by perceptions of crime. Additionally, the hypothesis has been advanced, that the relationships involving perceptions of crime and the dependent variables may be affected by the nature of the larger social context. Chapter 11 provides an empirical analysis of these hypothesized relationships using data collected from the residents of seven Alberta communities.

CHAPTER 6

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The scope of the preceding chapters has been broad. Numerous conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues have been raised with respect to both the determinants and the consequences of public perceptions of crime. In addition, several specific research hypotheses have been advanced. Before proceeding with a discussion of both the methodology and the findings of the present research effort, it may be advantageous to review these hypotheses, in a more systematic and concise manner.

Research Hypotheses: The Determinants of Perception

It has been argued that public perceptions of crime are influenced by both the characteristics of social actors and the characteristics of social environments. With respect to status characteristics, a distinction has been made between primary and secondary attributes. Primary status characteristics are those which relate to basic role dimensions (sex, age, socioeconomic status) while secondary characteristics are those which are influenced by these primary dimensions (experience with crime, media behaviour, length of residency in city and neighbourhood and resentment of social change).

With respect to primary status characteristics, it is hypothesized that:

h1: The primary status characteristics (sex, age and socioeconomic status) will be related to perceptions of crime in the overall sample. The relationships will be such that females, the elderly and lower socioeconomic status occupants, will experience more negative and more intense perceptions.

In Chapter 3, it was argued that the relationships involving primary status characteristics and perceptions of crime emerge out of basic life experiences associated with being female, elderly or of lower socioeconomic status. It is thus argued that the relationships, involving primary status characteristics and perceptions of crime, cannot be explained on the basis of a tendency to engage in secondary status behaviours likely to accentuate such perceptions. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

h2: Because the relationships involving sex, age and socioeconomic status emerge out of fundamental status dimensions associated with being female, elderly and of lower socioeconomic status, such relationships will not be explained by intervening variables such as media behaviour, victimization, resentment of social change, and length of residency in city or neighbourhood.

Similarly, because these relationships involve basic role dimensions and not a vulnerability to objectively threatening environments, it is hypothesized that:

h3: Additionally, because the relationships involving perceptions of crime and primary status characteristics are the products of fundamental status attributes rather than a "vulnerability" to crime, such relationships will be unaffected by the larger social context.

With respect to a number of secondary status characteristics, the following hypotheses are advanced:

h4a: The secondary status characteristics relating to media behaviour, victimization and length of residency in city and neighbourhood will be unrelated to perceptions of crime in the overall sample.

h4b: The secondary status characteristic of resentment to social change will be significantly related to perceptions of crime in the overall sample.

As discussed in Chapter 2, for reasons unique to each type of secondary status characteristic, it is further hypothesized that:

h5: The relationships involving secondary status characteristics and perceptions of crime will be differentially affected by the larger social context.

A number of arguments reviewed in Chapter 4 suggest that perceptions of crime may be influenced by the nature of the social environment, within which, social actors reside. The process which produces such effects is conceptualized in terms of the influence of the criminal environment. Thus, given the nature of such environments and their influence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

h6: The variable, social environment, will have independent explanatory power with respect to perceptions of crime.

A number of additional arguments provided in Chapter 4 maintain that the influence of the criminal environment results from the influence of a number of social environmental characteristics. As discussed in Chapter 4, these characteristics include; the objective level of crime, the instability of crime levels, population size, population increase, social hetergeneity and indicators of environmental deterioration. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

h7: The effect of social environment upon perceptions of crime results from the influence of numerous contextual characteristics associated with such environments.

Research Hypotheses: The Consequences of Perceptions of Crime

Theoretical and empirical research reviewed in Chapter 5 suggests the following hypothesis concerning the effects of differential perceptions of crime:

h8: Differential perceptions of crime will produce differential effects with respect to defensive behaviour, community affect and interpersonal trust.

While h8 indicates the general nature of the relationships involving perceptions of crime and their consequences, it does not address the manner in which such relationships might be influenced by the social environment. As discussed in Chapter 5, there are theoretical reasons for suggesting the possibility of threshold effects in this regard, such that the relationships involving perception of crime and their consequences, may be affected by the nature of the social environment. In other words, differential perceptions of crime may be more likely to produce effects within particular contextual environments. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

h9: The relationships involving perceptions of crime, on the one hand, and interpersonal trust, community affect and interpersonal trust on the other, will be differentially affected by the larger social environment.

Having generated these research hypotheses, it is necessary to consider the methodological issues relating to their evaluation. It is to the questions of research design, analytical techniques and their relationships to these hypothesized relationships, that the next chapter is addressed.

CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The analyses presented in subsequent chapters employ survey data, which were collected in the province of Alberta during the months of January and February, 1979. The original purpose of the survey was to gather information relating to the effectiveness of a province-wide mass media crime prevention campaign.[1] Thus, the research was designed and implemented in order to investigate problems other than those of direct interest in the present context. Still, a judicious use of these survey data, makes possible the empirical assessment of the hypotheses put forth in earlier chapters.

The purpose of the present chapter is to provide a general discussion of a number of methodological and analytical issues relating to the utilization of these data for present purposes.

Sample Selection

The survey research employed a sample of Alberta households in cities and towns with populations greater than 10,000.[2] The sample was drawn on the basis of approximate proportion of population represented by each town or city. To ensure an acceptable distribution of the sex variable, quota sampling was employed so that at least one-third of the respondents would be male. In addition, interviewing was restricted to respondents over the age of 17.

Because of methodological interests, unique to the research effort, the selection of respondents involved two types of sampling techniques. In two of the cities (Edmonton and Lethbridge), respondents were selected on the basis of traditional stratified random sampling techniques. In the remaining communities (Calgary, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat and Red Deer), respondents were chosen through the utilization of a relatively new sampling technique known as Random Digit Dialing.

Given the relatively innovative nature of Random Digit Dialing sample selection, a more complete explanation of this methodology is in order. In the past, researchers interested in sampling telephone subscribers have usually used as their relevant universe, the telephone directory. The problems inherent in such a technique are obvious. As Cooper (1964) notes, as high as 18% of the population of telephone subscribers may not be listed in the directory. Included in this group are those individuals who have requested that their telephone number not be listed, those who have recently moved, and those whose numbers have been omitted due to clerical errors. Similarly, Brunner and Brunner (1971) note that significant differences do exist with respect to the characteristics of populations who do and populations who do not voluntarily list their numbers in directories.

The methodology, known as Random Digit Dialing (RDD), is intended to overcome these problems of sample selection. (Cooper, 1964; Hauk and Cox, 1974; Tuchfarber and Klecka, 1976). The technique of RDD involves the generation of a sample of telephone numbers, through the utilization of random numbers. Four-digit random numbers, produced through the use of a random numbers table or a computer program, can be paired with known three-digit telephone prefixes in such a way, that a sample of telephone numbers rather than a sample of telephone subscribers is produced. As a result, the universe is not restricted to those who have their numbers recorded in the directory but is expanded to all numbers in existence, whether or not these numbers are listed.

The use of RDD reduces considerably the methodological flaws involved in the "directory" form of sample selection. Tuchfarber and Klecka, for example, compared a sample chosen through RDD with one chosen by traditional multi-stage stratified, clustered sampling procedures. These samples, drawn in Cincinnati, were shown to be demographically representative of the same population. The poor and blacks were not under-represented in the RDD sample, as had been feared, and although the sample was slightly skewed towards the more highly educated segments of the population, the difference was not serious. In addition, the researchers concluded that the omission of citizens without telephone service did not appear to bias the sample demographically nor did it adversely affect the substantive information being collected.

The data relating to sampling techniques as well as desired and actual sample size are found in Appendix A.

Interviewing

In all of the cities surveyed, interview data were collected by telephone. In each city, telephone interviewers were recruited locally and were subsequently trained by one of the principle investigators associated with the mass media crime prevention project. The attempt was made to control inter-group variation with respect to the interviewers through the utilization of a pre-tested questionnaire which contained mainly closed-ended items. The variation which did result from this form of interviewer selection and training seems to have primarily manifested itself in terms of differential completion rates rather than differentials with respect to the quality of the data.

Potential respondents to the survey were contacted by telephone between the hours of 9 A.M. and 9:30 P.M. on weekdays, and noon and 9:30 P.M. on weekends. Respondents were informed regarding the substantive nature of the survey, assured of confidentiality and urged to cooperate. The majority of the interviews required between twenty and thirty-five minutes for completion. When subjects expressed concern regarding the legitimacy of the research, it was suggested that they contact their local police for assurance regarding the authenticity of the project. While some of the questionnaire items tapped sensitive information, respondents who consented to the interview rarely failed to complete it. On the whole, interviewers reported very few complaints relating to either the questions asked or the technique of interviewing.

Because telephone interviewing has only recently been used for extensive social scientific research, a brief discussion of this methodology may be in order. A number of recent studies indicate that the quality of the data collected by telephone is quite high (Horton and Duncan, 1978). One such study by Hochstim (1967) critically compared three strategies of data collection. Each strategy combined personal interviews, in-person interviews and mail questionnaires in different combinations. The data revealed that the response rates were highly comparable and that mail, telephone and in-person methods of data collection exhibited virtually no difference with respect to validity or substantive findings.

Another study by Rogers (1976) revealed that the quality of data collected by telephone was as high as that collected in in-person interviews. Telephone respondents appeared capable of answering complex questions, and, they were not reluctant to answer so-called "sensitive questions" relating to voter preferences, income or education. Rogers also reported no significant differences in response rate, interview length, number of contacts required or timing of the interview. He concluded that, in some respects, the telephone interview may be preferable in that there is some evidence that respondents were less likely to give socially desirable responses over the telephone or to be affected by interviewer style.

A national telephone survey conducted by Kegeles and Kirscht (1969) concluded that the telephone holds great promise in social research. Both the validity of responses and the response rate itself were judged to be comparable to the in-person interview.

The telephone has been used to collect fertility data (Coombs and Freedman, 1964), public health information (Colombotos, 1969), public opinion data (Wiseman, 1972) and consumer information

Sudman, 1966). The consensus of the literature seems to be that for most types of survey research, telephone interviewing is quite acceptable with respect to its validity and rates of response (Dillman, Gallegos and Frey, 1976).

Measures

As mentioned, the data to be discussed in succeeding chapters were originally collected in order to address a set of substantive concerns other than those of direct interest here. Still, several of the questionnaire items may be employed in the present context. The precise nature of these items will be made explicit as each becomes relevant. Generally speaking, however, the survey instrument included items which relate to all of the major concerns of the present research. The complete survey instrument may be found in Appendix B.

While these survey data constitute the central research focus of the present effort, there were other data sources which require a brief comment at this point.

It was argued in Chapter 4, that a convincing case may be made for the existence of a theoretical relationship between public perceptions of crime and the objective characteristics of the environments within which people live. For this reason, data were collected which relate to the rates of crime, and the demographic structures of the seven cities within which the survey was conducted. Information concerning the population size and the population growth of these communities was acquired through the Population Research Laboratory at the University of Alberta. The crime rate data were obtained from the Uniform Crime Reports of Statistics Canada and local policing units.

It is readily acknowledged that official crime statistics constitute somewhat problematic measures of both the nature and the extent of crime in a given social setting (Nettler, 1978; Silverman, 1977). Despite their inaccuracies, however, such statistics may be cautiously interpreted as crude indicators of the relative amount of crime occurring within each city. Additionally, official crime statistics, aggregated to the city level, probably represent the measures to which residents are exposed through, for instance, the mass media.

Methods of Analysis

Choosing an appropriate analytic technique is always somewhat problematical in that each possesses characteristic strengths and weaknesses. It is the researcher's task to select the technique which, given the uniqueness of the research situation, allows these strengths and weaknesses to be adequately balanced. Unfortunately however, the match between research problems to be solved, and analytic tehcniques to be employed, is usually less than perfect.

One such strategy which might seem appropriate, with respect to the research problem outlined in previous chapters, is tabular analysis. Although tabular techniques allow for each of data presentation and for flexibility in terms of data manipulation, they are somewhat limited as analytic tools. Hirschi and Selvin (1967), for instance, discuss a number of such limitations and argue that the most serious problems in this regard include; the interminable nature of tabular analysis; the need for wastefully large samples; ambiguity with respect to causal inferences and the inefficient nature of tabular search procedures.

The problems normally inherent in tabular analysis are compounded by the aims of the present research effort, in at least two ways. First, it will be recalled that a number of indicators of perception of crime will be employed in the present analysis. A tabular approach to unravelling the manner in which each perception item relates to all independent and dependent variables would unnecessarily, and unreasonably expand the analysis. A second problem involved in attempting to apply tabular techniques to the task at hand concerns the multivariate nature of the research questions being posed. Arguments presented in earlier chapters, indicated the importance of multivariate techniques in attempting to understand the manner in which perceptions of crime are influenced, as well as the influences exerted by the perceptions themselves. Given the large number of relevant variables, it is likely that a tabular approach to multivariate analysis would prove to be quite unworkable.

For these reasons, then, the chapters which follow make extensive use of correlation and regression techniques,[3] rather than more traditional tabular methods. The advantages to be derived from the employment of regression techniques are many. First, such techniques allow the simultaneous treatment of a large number of predictor variables. Second, regression procedures allow for meaningful interpretations to be made with respect to the issue of predictive importance. Finally, the economy of regression procedures rather easily accommodates the employment of multiple indicators.

It is acknowledged that a major issue relating to the employment of regression techniques concerns the extent to which the assumptions of the model are violated. In this regard, it should be noted that regression techniques are quite robust and therefore resistant to the violations of assumptions (Bohrnstedt and Carter, 1971; Kerlinger and Pedhauzer, 1973).

A special problem in the present research concerns the suitability of regression analysis to dichotomous variables. This problem arises from the fact that a number of items employed as measures of perception and as measures of the dependent variables are dichotemous in nature. In mathematical terms, there is nothing problematical about the use of dichotomous variables in regression analysis. Such variables satisfy the mathematical requirement of ordering and, since they have only one interval, equal to itself, may be treated as interval measures (Nie et al, 1975). When such variables are used as predictors, they may be conveniently treated as dummy variables. And, although the range of possible values is restricted, dichotomous variables may also be treated as dependent variables for the purposes of regression analysis (Gillespe 1977; Knoke, 1975).

Summary

This chapter has raised a number of methodological issues relating to the analyses presented in subsequent chapters. While general statements regarding sample selection, measurement and data analysis have been provided, more specific questions regarding research methodology will be discussed as they become relevant.

The discussion of the seven-city perception of crime data analysis is presented in the next four chapters. Chapter 8 discusses the perception of crime indicators and their interrelationships. The relationships involving perceptions of crime on the one hand and social status and social environmental characteristics on the other are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10 respectively. Finally, Chapter 11 takes up the question of the consequences which perceptions of crime have for interpersonal trust, community affect and defensive behaviour.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The mass media campaign and its evaluation are discussed in detail by Silverman and Sacco (1980).

[2] The town of Camrose, Alberta was not included in the survey, even though its population is slightly greater than 10,000. Time restraints prevented the hiring and training of interviewers.

[3] Useful discussion of regression and correlation techniques may be found in Blalock (1972), Bohrnstedt and Carter (1971), Cohen and Cohen (1975), Draper and Smith (1966), Kerlinger and Pedhauzer (1973), Mosteller and Tukey (1977), Mueller, Schuessler and Costner (1977) and Palumbo (1977).

CHAPTER 8

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: AN ANALYSIS OF INDICATORS & DIMENSIONS

Introduction

Previous chapters indicated the relevant dimensions according to which public perceptions of crime might be categorized. The distinctions regarding subjective probability of victimization, concern with and fear of crime derive from the conceptual bases of earlier theory and research. This chapter employs the present data set in order to present a discussion of these dimensions, their indicators and, their interrelationships. The measure of association used throughout this preliminary analysis is Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient(r). This measure is deemed appropriate in light of methodological arguments presented in the preceding chapter.

The Subjective Probability of Victimization

As indicated previously, subjective probability of victimization refers to the extent to which members of the public perceive the likelihood of being criminally victimized. This dimension is conceptualized as being primarily cognitive (as opposed to affective) in nature. Likelihoods, with respect to the subjective probability of victimization, may be in reference to specific social settings, such as a city or neighbourhood, or specific offences. The indicators of subjective probability of victimization which are employed in the present study may be subdivided as follows:

(i) Subjective Probability of Victimization (Neighbourhood) In terms of this dimension, research concern is with the degree to which respondents perceive their neighbourhoods as places of risk regarding the possibility of criminal victimization. Two items are utilized for this purpose. The first asked respondents to compare their neighbourhoods with other neighbourhoods in the cities in which they lived, and to make a determination as to whether their own neighbourhoods were "very safe, about average, less safe than most or one of the worst in the city" with respect to the likelihood of serious criminal victimization.

The second neighbourhood item asked respondents to indicate whether they thought that it was "very likely" or "not very likely" that someone walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark would be "held up or attacked".

These items differ in that the former, but not the latter, elicits a comparative response regarding subjective probability of victimization (neighbourhood). The marginal data in Table 8.1 suggest that, with respect to both items, respondents tended to view their neighbourhoods as low risk areas. This is consistent with earlier research as discussed in Chapter 3.

(ii) Subjective Probability of Victimization (City). This designation refers to the degree to which members of the public perceive their cities as places of risk regarding the possibility of serious criminal victimization. The phrasing of the item, employed as a measure of this dimension, in the present study was similar to that of the comparative neighbourhood item discussed above.

Table 8.1

Intercorrelations: Perceptions of Crime

Subjective Probability of Victimization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Neighbourhood									
1. chance of serious crime									
2. how likely some attacked	-.205***								
City									
3. chance of serious crime	.190***	-.149***							
Crimes									
4. break and enter	-.028	.072*	-.109**						
5. assault	-.026	.122***	-.184***	.540***					
Fear of Crime									
Neighbourhood									
6. safe alone at night	.288***	-.319***	.192***	-.068*	.148***				
Crimes									
7. break and enter	-.068*	.047	-.095**	.113**	.058*	-.153***			
8. assault	-.144***	.175***	-.182***	.077*	.205***	-.367***	.302***		
Concern with Crime	.016	-.081*	.146***	-.037	-.061*	.188***	-.100**	-.104**	
$\bar{X}$ =	1.74	1.89	2.15	1.27	1.35	2.05	1.21	1.47	1.56
SD =	.59	.31	.76	.45	.48	.94	.41	.50	.75
Range =	1-4	1-2	1-4	1-2	1-2	1-4	1-2	1-2	1-3

N = 824

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

In other words, respondents were asked to make the determination as to whether the cities in which they lived were "very safe, about average, less safe than most, or one of the worst in the province" with respect to the chances of serious criminal victimization. The marginal data in Table 8.1 indicate that when the frame of reference shifted from neighbourhood to city, the comparative perception of risk increased.

(iii) Subjective Probability of Victimization (Crimes). With respect to this dimension, interest centres around the extent to which members of the public perceive increases in the likelihood of crime-specific victimization. Thus, in the present study, respondents were asked to indicate if they thought that their chances of being a victim of "break and enter" and "assault" had "gone up, gone down or remained the same in recent years".[1] For both of these items, the similarities of means and standard deviations may be taken as suggesting that respondents similarly perceived dissimilar crimes with respect to the increases in victimization probabilities. It may be that many people perceived crime in general as increasing and thus when they were asked about any specific crime, they responded in a manner consistent with this generalized impression.

Fear of Crime

A second major perceptual dimension which has attracted considerable theoretical and research attention is the fear of crime.

This dimension relates to the affective orientation which members of the public have toward crime in the social environment. The essence of fear of crime is a personalized anxiety relating to the possibility of criminal victimization. Indicators employed in the present study, as measures of the fear of crime, are subdivided into two sets:

(i) Fear of Crime (Neighbourhood). Items employed in this context would attempt to assess respondents' feelings of personal safety in the neighbourhoods in which they reside. Thus, respondents to the present survey were asked whether they felt "very safe, reasonably safe, somewhat unsafe or very unsafe" while walking alone in their neighbourhoods at night.

(ii) Fear of Crime (Crimes). This designation further subdivides the major fear of crime dimension according to crime-specific perceptions. Thus, in the present study, for a number of crimes, respondents were asked if they were "concerned" or "not concerned" about becoming a victim of each of these crimes at some time in the future. Only the data relating to "break and enter" and "assault" are presented in Table 8.1. The marginal information associated with these two dichotemized items suggests an interpretation similar to that reported above regarding subjective probability of Victimization (Crimes). In other words, fear of specific crimes may emanate from a general fear of crime.

Concern with Crime

The third major perceptual dimension to be explored in the present study is concern with crime. A discussed previously, the term concern is intended to signify a somewhat abstract and impersonal affective response to crime. Concern with crime may be conceptualized as a form of "social problem consciousness".

The present study employed a single index as the measure of concern. Early in the interview, respondents were read a list of problems and asked to indicate the one to which they had been "paying most attention recently". Those who responded to this item were then asked if there was another listed problem to which they had been paying attention. The concern index employed in the present study was constructed from these two items such that respondents who did not mention "crime" as either a first or second choice received a score of "1", those who answered "crime" as a second problem were assigned a score of "2", and those who indicated crime as a first problem received a score of "3". The mean concern index score of 1.56 (Table 8.1) might be taken as suggesting that overall, the concern with crime was low in the present sample.

The Subjective Probability of Victimization: The Intercorrelation of Indicators

The body of Table 8.1 provides information relating to the manner in which the various indicators of perception of crime are interrelated. In general, all of the relationships are in the expected direction.

With respect to subjective probability of victimization, it will be noted that the two neighbourhood measures are significantly correlated. In addition, both measures of subjective probability of victimization (neighbourhood) are moderately related to subjective proability of victimization (city).

Table 8.1 also suggests that when the frame of reference shifts from the neighbourhood to the city, the relationships involving general subjective probability of victimization, and subjective probability of victimization (crimes) are strengthened. These data may suggest that, it is the perception of the uncertain environment of the city, rather than the familiar environment of the neighbourhood as a dangerous place, that is related to feelings of personal vulnerability regarding specific victimization.

Finally, with respect to the intercorrelation of subjective probability of victimization items, it will be noted that the realtionship between the indicators of subjective probability of victimization (crimes) is rather high (.540). These data are consistent with the suggestion that respondents may have perceived the chances of victimization (in general) as increasing and thus when asked about any specific crime, they replied in a manner consistent with this generalized perception.

Fear of Crime: The Intercorrelation of Indicators

Table 8.1 suggests that the general measure of fear is related to respondents' apprehension concerning specific victimization incidents. Predictably, the item which is addressed to the crime of break and enter is less strongly related to the general measure of neighbourhood fear that is the assault item.

The relatively high correlation between the specific crime items may suggest that fear of crime is generalized rather than an offence-specific phenomenon. Such an interpretation is consistent with data reported above.

Fear of Crime and Subjective Probability of Victimization

It is logical to expect that measurements of various dimensions of perceptions of crime will be interrelated. Still, the theoretical nature of the relationships between dimensions of perception is unclear. It is possible to suggest, as did Conklin, (1975) that some types of perception (that is those of a cognitive nature) may in a sense be causally related to other perceptions (those of an affective nature).

In the present context such logic might suggest that subjective probability of victimization is causally prior to the fear of crime. In other words, it may be argued that social actors become afraid of crime because they view the possibilities of victimization as relatively great.

While such logic may be intuitively appealing, it may simplify what is probably a more complex relationship. It could just as easily be argued that social actors perceive the possibilities of victimization as relatively great because, in part, they are afraid of crime.

The possible causal relationships which might link together various dimensions of perceptions of crime is not an appropriately relevant issue in the present context. Rather, the concern is merely with the nature and strength of such relationships.

Table 8.1 presents data which allow for an assessment of the relationships existing between indicators of subjective probability of victimization and fear of crime. The data indicate that respondents' perception of comparative neighbourhood safety and respondents' perception that someone walking alone in the neighbourhood will be held up, are significantly related to feelings of safety in the neighbourhood.

The data also relate respondents' perceptions of increases in probabilities of victimization with respect to specific offences to fear of victimization regarding these same crimes. For both break and enter and assault, the perception of increases in the probability of victimization is significantly related to fear. It will be noted that the relationship is stronger in the case of assault (r = .205) than in the case of break and enter (.113). The suggested interpretation is that the relationship between subjective probability of victimization and fear of crime is dependent upon the degree to which the crime is personally threatening. Thus, in the case of assault, the perception of an increase in the probability of victimization is more salient and thus more fear-related.

Fear of Crime, Subjective Probability of Victimization and Concern with Crime

The existing literature is unclear with respect to the manner in which concern relates to either fear of crime or to more cognitive dimensions. Furstenberg's (1971) analysis of Baltimore public opinion data found no relationship between fear and concern while Lotz (1979), reported a moderate relationship.

In general, the data in Table 8.1 suggest that concern is weakly related to other indicators of perception of crime. In all cases, as concern increases, so does the fear of crime or the subjective probability of victimization.

Most notably, the data in Table 8.1 indicate that concern with crime is related to feelings of safety when walking alone in the neighbourhood at night, the crime-specific fear items and perception of the likelihood of serious crime in the city. This last relationship is rather easily understood. It might be expected that a relatively distant and abstract concern with crime would be related to perceptions of an uncertain urban environment. This interpretation is consistent with material discussed earlier.

However, the relationships involving feelings of personal safety and the offence-specific fear items are less easily understood. In Baltimore, Furstenberg found that those respondents who were most afraid of personal victimization were no more or less likely to be concerned about crime than anyone else.

Two possible explanations of these contradictory findings may be advanced. First, the differing results may merely reflect differing techniques of measurement. The items used to measure fear and concern in the present study are not identical to those used by Furstenberg. With respect to concern, for instance, the present study asked respondents about problems to which they have been "paying attention" whereas the Baltimore study asked respondents about problems that they would like to see the government "do something about".

A second and more intriguing possibility involves a consideration of the differential compositions of the populations in Baltimore and Alberta. The respondents in the Baltimore study were all residents of a major metropolitan area whereas respondents to the present study resided in communities of varying size. Additionally, the city of Baltimore has a sizeable black population. This fact is particularly salient in view of Furstenberg's analysis of the relationship between concern with crime and resentment of changing social conditions--particularly change aimed at eliminating minority injustice. Thus, differential forms and levels of racial hetrogeneity may affect concern and the relationship between concern and other perceptual indicators.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has described in some detail a number of relationships existing within and between categories of indicators of perception of crime.

With respect to subjective probability of victimization, it was found that the neighbourhood indicators are highly correlated and that both of these indicators are related to subjective probability of victimization (city). In addition, it was shown that perception of the city rather than the neighbourhood as a dangerous place is related to crime-specific probabilities of victimization. The high correlation between crime specific indicators is interpreted as suggesting respondents' generalized perceptions of crime and the risks of victimization as increasing.

The intercorrelation among fear items suggests that the general measure of feelings of personal safety in the neighbourhood is related to victimization anxieties with respect to the crimes of break and enter and assault. The relatively high correlation between crime specific items suggests that fear, like perceptions of increasing probabilities of victimization, is a generalized perception.

This chapter also examined the relationships existing between the indicators of subjective probability of victimization and fear of crime. Predictably, respondents' perceptions of the likelihood of victimization, in the neighbourhood, was found to be related to feelings of personal safety in the neighbourhood. The analysis also suggests that for the crimes of break and enter and assault, the perception of increases in the probability of victimization is significantly related to crime-specific fear of victimization. This relationship is stronger in the case of assault than in the case of break and enter.

A final set of findings involves the manner in which concern with crime is related to indicators of subjective probability of victimization and fear of crime. Overall, the relationships are weak and in an expected direction. In this regard, the comparability of present findings to earlier research was discussed.

In general, the indicators of various dimensions of crime were found to relate to each other in highly predictable fashion. The purpose of this chapter has been to describe and make explicit these relationships rather than to provide theoretical linkages. As stated, it would be grossly deterministic to argue that some types of perceptions of crime cause other types of perceptions of crime.

In the chapter that follows, an effort is made to determine the manner in which these various dimensions of perceptions are related to the characteristics of social actors.

FOOTNOTE

[1] This item was recoded into dichotomous form, such that the responses "gone down" and "remained the same" were combined.

CHAPTER 9

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME & STATUS CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

This chapter and the two which follow are concerned with an empirical analysis of the determinants and consequences of public perceptions of crime. The analyses employ data gathered from a sample of residents of seven Alberta communities.

Specifically, the present chapter is addressed to questions concerning the relationship between perceptions of crime and the primary and secondary status characteristics of social actors. The next chapter shifts the analytical focus away from the actors themselves and towards the nature of the social enviroments within which these actors reside. Finally, Chapter 11 presents data concerning the effects which differential perceptions of crime have for a number of dependent variables. Each chapter is organized according to the relevant hypotheses presented in Chapter 6.

Primary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime

In Chapter 3, it was hypothesized that:

h1: The primary status characteristics (sex, age and socioeconomic status) will be related to perceptions of crime in the overall sample. The relationships will be such that females the elderly and lower socioeconomic status occupants will experience more negative and more intense perceptions.

Data bearing on this hypothesis are presented in Tables 9.1-9.3. The most notable feature of these data concerns the number of weak and in many cases nonexistent relationships between primary status characteristics, on the one hand, and perceptions of crime on the other.

Overall, on the basis of these zero-order relationships it appears that sex is the most important predictor of perception. With respect to subjective probability of victimization, females are slightly more likely than males to suggest that someone walking alone in the neighbourhood will be held up or attacked and that the chances of being a victim of assault have gone up in recent years. In the case of fear of crime measures, sex emerges as a more important variable. Females are significantly more likely than males to report feeling unsafe while walking alone at night and to express concern regarding the possibility of becoming assault victims.

For purposes of the present and subsequent analysis, the age variable is treated as dichotomous. Category 1 includes respondents aged 59 years or younger while Category 2 references respondents 60 years of age and older. Although this procedure is somewhat unusual, it is justified for two reasons. First, there is no reason to assume that the age variable is related to perceptions of crime in linear fashion. It is unlikely, for instance, that fear of crime steadily increases from the late teenage years through middle age. A second reason for the dichotomous coding of age relates to the theoretical predictions concerning this variable. In the present research, the interest is not with age, in general,

Table 9.1

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Sex and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Sex and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Media Factors, Victimization, Residential Factors and Resentment of Social Change: r

	Perceptions of Crime								
	Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			Concern with Crime
	Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood		Crimes	
	chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	assault	
SEX	.039	-.100**	-.011	-.016	-.116***	.439***	-.030	-.316***	.045
Media Factors									
newspapers	.035	-.094**	-.019	-.022	-.116***	.435***	-.035	-.311***	.043
television	.037	-.098**	-.008	-.021	-.124***	.434***	-.023	-.314***	.038
television news	.038	-.100**	-.012	-.016	-.116***	.439***	-.031	-.317***	.047
Victimization	.043	-.100**	-.011	-.018	-.117***	.441***	-.030	-.307***	.051
Residential Factors									
long at address	-.037	-.100**	-.017	-.019	-.118***	.434***	-.032	-.316***	.050
long in city	-.035	-.101**	-.010	-.020	-.119***	.439***	-.034	-.315***	.050
Resentment of Social Change									
social problems-old moral standards	.040	-.094**	-.010	-.014	-.104**	.430***	-.024	-.305***	.031
city is growing too quickly	.038	-.091**	-.025	-.010	-.106**	.430***	-.028	-.306***	.043

N = 824

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 9.2

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Age and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Age and Perceptions of Crime controlling for Media Factors, Victimization, Residential Factors and Resentment of Social Change: r

	Perceptions of Crime								
	Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
	Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood		Crimes	Concern with Crime
	chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	assault	
AGE	-.115***	-.073*	-.019	-.041	-.055	.019	.005	.058*	.007
Media Factors									
newspaper	-.116***	-.073*	-.019	-.042	-.055	.018	.005	.058*	.014
television	-.115***	-.074*	-.020	-.039	-.052	.022	.002	.056	.018
television news	-.112***	-.073*	-.016	-.040	-.055	.022	.008	.059*	.015
Victimization	-.117***	-.073*	-.019	-.041	-.054	.018	.005	.057	.013
Residential Factors									
long at address	-.097**	-.071*	-.016	-.018	-.039	.025	.025	.052	-.010
long in city	-.094**	-.068*	-.026	-.018	-.042	.020	.029	.050	-.003
Resentment of Social Change									
social problems-old moral standards	-.115***	-.071*	-.018	-.041	-.051	.014	.007	.062*	.009
city is growing too quickly	-.117***	-.066*	-.030	-.037	-.047	.003	.006	.072*	.011

N = 824

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 9.3

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Socioeconomic Status and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Socioeconomic Status and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Media Factors, Victimization, Residential Factors and Resentment of Social Change: r

	Perceptions of Crime								
	Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
	Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood		Crimes	Concern with Crime
	chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	assault	
SES	-.064*	.038	-.033	-.041	.030	-.102**	.037	.131***	-.140***
Media Factors									
newspapers	-.055	.026	-.016	-.028	.030	-.088**	-.026	.116***	-.132***
television	-.060*	.033	-.043	-.030	.048	-.084**	-.054	.124***	-.121***
television news	-.062*	.038	-.032	-.041	.029	-.102**	-.036	.132***	-.139***
Victimization	-.063*	.038	-.033	-.041	.030	-.102**	-.037	.132***	-.139***
Residential Factors									
long at address	-.067*	.037	-.033	-.045	.028	-.103**	-.040	.132***	-.137***
long in city	-.067*	.037	-.032	-.044	.028	-.102**	-.040	.133***	-.138***
Resentment of Social Change									
social problems-old moral standards	-.065*	.032	-.035	-.043	.020	-.091**	-.042	.121***	-.128***
city is growing too quickly	-.063*	.034	-.029	-.043	.026	-.097**	-.038	.127***	-.138***

N = 824

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

but with the aged, as a special group. It is felt that the present coding procedure accomplishes this theoretical purpose.

The age variable is less strongly and more inconsistently related to the perception items than is the sex variable. The recording of the age variable in order to distinguish the high-risk elderly group does not produce a clear relational pattern suggesting more intense perceptions among older respondents. The only relationship achieving significance at greater than the .05 level indicates that older respondents are more likely to view their neighbourhoods favourably than are younger respondents with respect to the chances of serious crime occurring in the neighbourhood.

Socioeconomic status in the present study was measured using Blishen's (1958) occupational prestige scores. Consistent with hypothesis 1, lower socioeconomic status occupants are less likely than higher socioeconomic status occupants to feel safe while walking alone at night, and somewhat more likely to be concerned about the possibility of assault victimization. It will also be noted in Table 9.3 that socioeconomic status is negatively related to concern with crime. Both Furstenberg (1971) and Conklin, (1975) have argued that the relationship is positive and that conoern with crime is more a middle class than a working or lower class phenomenon. The inconsistency is difficult to account for. As discussed, the differential wording of the concern item in the present study or the differential nature of the research setting may account for the apparent contradiction.

In summary, hypothesis 1 is only partially supported by the present data. Sex is significantly and strongly related to the perception items which involve personal safety. Consistent with earlier research, sex appears to be the most important primary status predictor with respect to perception. The age variable, however, is weakly and inconsistently related to the perception items. The treatment of the age variable, as dichotomous, in order to isolate elderly respondents did not reveal a consistent relational pattern involving age and perception. Finally, the socioeconomic status variable is weakly related to the perception items in the predicted direction.

While the analysis thus far suggests that with the exception of age, the effects of primary status characteristics upon perception are generally in the direction predicted by hypothesis hl, the question remains as to the theoretical meaning of such effects. As discussed, three possible theoretical explanations may be advanced:

1. Members of some status groups (females, the aged and lower socioeconomic status occupants) engage in secondary behaviours (eg. victimization, media consumption) which lead to exaggerated perceptions of crime.
2. Differential perceptions of crime associated with the status groups of interest result from a differential vulnerability to threat. As threats vary, so do feelings of vulnerability and thus the relationships involving status groups and perceptions of crime will be dependent upon the criminal environment.

3. The effect of primary status attributes upon perceptions of crime emerges out of general conditions of powerlessness basic to specific status group positions.

Arguments presented in Chapter 3 stressed the theoretical viability of the third explanation. Hypotheses h2 and h3 address these competing explanations of the effects of primary status attributes upon perception.

h2: Because the relationships involving sex, age and socioeconomic status emerge out of fundamental status dimensions associated with being female, elderly and of lower socioeconomic status, such relationships will not be explained by intervening variables such as media behaviour, victimization, resentment of social change and length of residency in city or neighbourhood.

Data which bear upon this hypothesis are presented in Tables 9.1-9.3. The bodies of these tables contain first-order correlation coefficients involving primary status attributes and perceptions of crime, controlling for media behaviour, victimization, resentment of social change and residential factors.

In general, the introduction of these control variables has little effect upon the zero-order relationships. A number of the smaller relationships cease to be statistically significant when the controls are introduced. But, the overall pattern involving primary status attributes and perceptions of crime as described above, remains largely unchanged. In general then, the argument that the relationships involving primary status attributes and perceptions of crime can be explained.on the basis of secondary behaviours,is not supported.

A second explanation of the relationships involving sex, age and socioeconomic status on the one hand and indicators of perception on the other is summarized in hypothesis h3:

h3: Additionally, because the relationships involving perceptions of crime and primary status characteristics are the products of fundamental status attributes rather than a "vulnerability" to crime, such relationships will be unaffected by the larger social context.

As explained in Chapter 3, the argument presented in hypothesis h3 would suggest that the relationship between primary status group membership and perceptions of crime is dependent upon the differential influence of the content of the criminal environment. Thus, the prediction is that primary status attributes, in a sense, interact with the larger social setting to produce across setting relationships between status attributes and perceptions of crime which vary in size and direction.

This prediction can be quite simply tested through the utilization of the chi-square statistic (Cohen and Cohen, 1975; Edwards, 1973). By transforming the zero-order correlation coefficients to z' statistics, it is possible to use the chi-square measure to determine whether two or more independent correlation coefficients are representative of the same population relationship.[2]

For the purpose of this test, the three primary status attributes are related to three perception of crime items (chance of serious crime (city); fear of assault; concern with crime). The resulting chi-square statistics are presented in Table 9.4. It will be noted that none of these statistics reaches statistical significance. Thus, the notion that primary status differentials with respect to perceptions of crime may be explained in terms of differential vulnerability to the criminal environment is not supported.

Primary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime: Summary

The data analysis presented above provide only partial support for the hypothesized relationships regarding primary status attributes and perceptions of crime. With the exception of sex, primary status attributes do not appear to be of extremely important predictive value with respect to perceptions of crime. A multivariate perspective on this problem is provided in Table 9.5. Taken together, the primary status attributes do not explain a great deal of the variation in the perception items. The major exceptions in this regard are the items relating to feelings of safety while walking alone and fear of assault. Conceptually speaking, it appears that the predictive power of independent variables, to a great extent, is delicately predicated upon the choice of perceptual indicators.

However, those relationships which do exist between primary status attributes and perceptual measures are not explained away by secondary characteristics nor do they seem to be the product of differential vulnerabilities.

It must, of course, be pointed out that the exclusion of

Table 9.4

Across City Comparisons: Chance of Serious Crime (City), Fear of Assault and Concern with Crime by Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: x^2

	chance of serious crime (city)	fear of assault	concern with crime
Sex	4.02	9.55	7.59
Age	12.25	8.19	1.98
SES	7.35	4.39	7.06

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 9.5

Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and R^2

		Perceptions of Crime								
		Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
		Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood		Crimes	Concern with Crime
		chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	assault	
Sex										
	b =	.445	-.613**	-.182**	-.151	-.113***	.833***	-.248	-.319***	.692
	Beta =	.037	-.100	-.012	-.017	-.116	.438	-.030	-.315	.046
Age										
	b =	-.381***	-.125	-.821*	-.106	-.150	.114	-.101	.157	.556
	Beta =	-.116	-.074	-.019	-.042	-.055	.022	-.037	.056	.013
SES										
	b =	-.254	.738	-.170	-.126	.912	-.621**	.999	.434***	-.695***
	Beta =	-.065	.036	-.033	-.042	.028	-.099	.004	.129	-.139
	R^2 =	.019**	.016**	.002	.003	.017**	.203***	.002	.120***	.022***

N = 824

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

explanations based upon secondary characteristics or vulnerability does not prove that perceptions of crime are in fact the product of deeply based feelings of powerlessness associated with minority status. Three major data limitations prevent any firm determination in this regard. First, the survey instrument employed in the present study did not contain items relating to more generalized feelings of powerlessness. Second, it is possible that the relationships involving primary status attributes and perception may be explained through the introduction of control variables not employed in the present analysis. Finally, the seven cities in which the present research was undertaken may not differ appropriately in terms of their criminal environments so as to allow for a true test of the hypothesis of differential vulnerability.

However, the exclusion of explanations based upon secondary characteristics and differential vulnerability does in the case of sex and socioeconomic status make the suggested relationship involving primary status attributes, generalized feelings of powerlessness and perceptions of crime a more viable hypothesis for future research.

Secondary Status Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime

Chapter 3 identified a number of secondary status characteristics which have been mentioned in the literature as factors which exert varying influence upon perceptions of crime. They are secondary in that their nature is, no doubt in large part determined by the primary status characteristics discussed above. With respect to these variables, it has been hypothesized that:

h4a: The secondary status characteristics relating to media behaviour, victimization and length of residency in city and neighbourhood will be unrelated to perceptions of crime in the overall sample.

h4b: The secondary status characteristic of resentment to social change will be significantly related to perceptions of crime in the overall sample.

Data bearing upon these hypotheses are presented in Tables 9.6-9.9 which provide the zero-order correlation coefficients involving indicators of these secondary characteristics and indicators of perception. To clarify the discussion which follows, each set of secondary characteristics will be considered individually.

1. Media Factors. Media consumption was measured through the employment of three questionnaire items. For all three items, respondents were asked about behaviour which occurred during the week preceding the survey. The assumption which underlies such questions is that the time period is not atypical. Total numbers of hours spent watching television were reported and treated as interval level measures. The possible "yes/no" response pattern to the item "in the last week did you watch any television news?" was treated as a dichotomous independent variable.

The correlation matrix involving media factors and perceptions of crime suggests that overall, relationships in this regard are quite weak. There is not a single relationship which reaches statistical significance at the .001 level. In addition,

Table 9.6

Zero-Order Correlations Coefficients between Media Factors and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Media Factors and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r

	Perceptions of Crime								
	Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
	Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood			
	chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	Crimes assault	Concern with Crime
MEDIA FACTORS									
NEWSPAPER	-.059*	.075*	-.101**	-.083**	.004	-.097**	-.065*	-.110**	-.057
TELEVISION	.027	-.028	-.046	.056	.087**	.101**	-.080*	-.049	.106**
TELEVISION NEWS	-.082**	.011	.061*	.026	-.015	.023	.070*	.027	.008
Sex									
Media Factors									
newspaper	-.056	.068*	-.102**	-.084**	-.006	-.070*	-.068*	.090**	-.053
television	.024	-.020	-.045	.058*	.098**	.072*	-.078*	-.024	.103**
television news	.082**	.012	.062*	.026	-.014	.021	.071*	.032	.008
Age									
Media Factors									
newspaper	-.060*	.075*	-.101**	-.083**	.003	-.097**	-.065*	.110**	-.057
television	.023	-.030	-.046	.055	.085**	.102**	-.080*	-.048	.107**
television news	.078*	.008	.061*	.024	-.017	.023	.071*	.030	.009
SES									
Media Factors									
newspaper	-.049	.070*	-.097**	-.077*	-.002	-.081*	-.060*	.090**	-.034
television	.014	-.021	-.054	.049	.095**	.083**	-.090**	-.024	.080*
television news	.081*	.012	.061*	.025	.014	.021	.070*	.030	.006

N = 824

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 9.7

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Victimization and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Victimization and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r

	Perceptions of Crime								
	Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
	Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood		Crimes	Concern with Crime
	chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	assault	
VICTIMIZATION	-.068*	-.005	-.009	.040	.015	-.017	.003	-.046	-.065*
Sex Victimization	-.071*	.003	-.009	.041	.022	-.046	.005	-.030	-.068*
Age Victimization	-.068*	-.006	-.009	.040	.015	-.016	.003	-.048	-.065*
SES Victimization	-.071*	-.006	-.010	.039	.014	-.007	.003	-.045	-.065*

N = 824

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 9.8

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Residential Factors and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Residential Factors and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r

	Perceptions of Crime								
	Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
	Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood		Crimes	Concern with Crime
	chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	assault	
RESIDENTIAL FACTORS									
LONG AT ADDRESS	-.095**	-.019	-.013	-.107**	-.075*	-.028	-.090**	.033	.107**
LONG IN CITY	-.099**	-.029	.027	-.095**	-.057	-.002	-.091**	.035	.066**
Sex									
Residential Factors									
long at address	-.094**	-.021	-.013	-.107**	-.078*	-.019	-.091**	.027	.108**
long in city	-.097**	-.033	-.026	-.096**	-.063*	.021	-.03**	.021	.068*
Age									
Residential Factors									
long at address	-.072*	-.003	-.009	-.100**	-.065*	-.033	-.093**	.021	.106**
long in city	-.073*	-.010	.032	-.088**	-.045	-.007	=.096**	.022	.065*
SES									
Residential Factors									
long at address	-.097**	-.018	-.014	-.108**	-.074*	-.031	-.091**	.038	.104**
long in city	-.101**	-.027	-.026	-.097**	-.056	-.005	-.093**	.040	.062*

N = 824

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 9.9

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Resentment of Social Change and Perceptions of Crime and Partial Correlation Coefficients between Resentment of Social Change and Perceptions of Crime Controlling for Sex, Age and Socioeconomic Status: r

	Perceptions of Crime								
	Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
	Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood			
	chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	Crimes assault	Concern with Crime
RESENTMENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE									
SOCIAL PROBLEMS-OLD MORAL STANDARDS	.005	.052	.012	.013	.095**	-.111**	.044	.104**	-.118***
CITY IS GROWING TOO QUICKLY	.014	.105**	-.135***	.056	.111**	-.201***	.017	.165***	-.042
Sex									
Resentment of Social Change									
social problems-old moral standards	.010	.039	.011	.011	.080**	-.056	-.040	.064	-.113**
city is growing too quickly	-.010	.096**	-.137***	.055	.101**	-.178***	.014	.142***	-.038
Age									
Resentment of Social Change									
social problems-old moral standards	-.002	.049	.018	.018	.093**	-.110**	.044	.107**	-.118***
city is growing too quickly	-.023	.100**	-.137***	.053	.107**	-.200***	.017	.170***	-.041
SES									
Resentment of Social Change									
social problems-old moral standards	-.002	.049	.016	.018	.092**	-.101**	.048	.091**	-.104***
city is growing too quickly	-.023	.103**	-.134***	.056	.110**	-.199***	.018	.162***	-.038

N = 824

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

those relationships which do exist suggest that the media indicators do not uniformly relate to the perceptual indicators and that for any individual media indicator, the relationships involving perception are not in a uniform direction.

In the case of newspaper reading, for instance, higher reading levels are associated with perceptions of the neighbourhood and city as relatively safe and with greater feelings of safety while walking alone. However, higher levels of newspaper reading are also associated with increases in the subjective probability of break and enter, concern about the possibility of break and enter and assault victimization. The items involving television viewing and television news present similarly confused and inconsistent relationships.

Table 9.6 presents the first order relationships involving media factors and perception, controlling for sex, age and socioeconomic status. Generally, the introduction of these prior variables has little effect upon the small but significant zero-order relationships. The relationships which exist in this regard appear to be real rather than spurious.

In summary, the generally small effect of the media variables and their inconsistent influence make interpretation difficult. Clearly, whatever small effects media behaviour exert upon perceptions of crime seem to suggest complexities which require research methodologies capable of taking such complexity into account.

2. Victimization. Respondents were asked, "are you aware of a crime that has been committed against you or your property in the last six months?" The "yes" or "no" responses to this item constitute the values of the dichotomized variable intended as an indicator of recent victimization experience.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there is little reason to suspect that victimization experience *per se* would be related to perceptions of crime in the overall sample. Consistent with what is more generally known about victimization experiences, the survey revealed that the bulk of victimization experiences were of a non-serious property type.[3] The relative unimportance of victimization with respect to perceptions of crime is clearly evident in Table 9.7. The introduction of first-order controls for sex, age and socioeconomic status does little to affect the zero-order relationships involving victimization and perceptions of crime.

3. Length of Residency. The present study employs two measures of residency. Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years that they had lived in the city and at the address where they were residing at the time of the survey. For analytical purposes, both items are treated as interval measures.

It will be noted in Table 9.8, that both variables relate to perception in the same direction. Although the relationships are small, they are interesting. The data suggest that longer periods of residency seem to be associated with perceptions of the neighbourhood as relatively unsafe. It may be, as suggested in Chapter

3, that perceptions of changing neighbourhood conditions lead residents to perceive the areas in which they live as places of greater risk. Consistent with this interpretation, longer periods of residency are also significantly related to the perception of the subjective probability of victimization as having increased. It is of particular interest to note that length of residency is positively related to the measure of concern with crime. Furstenberg has argued that concern with crime is related to perceptions of changing social conditions. It may be that longer periods of residency make possible the perception of a greater number of cues of changing social conditions.

Table 9.8 presents the relationships involving length of residence and perceptions of crime when first-order controls for sex, age and socioeconomic status are introduced. It will be noted that the introduction of these controls does not significantly affect the overall pattern of zero-order relationships.

4. Resentment of Social Change. As discussed in Chapter 3, a number of writers have suggested that perceptions of crime may in part be the displacement of more deeply held attitudinal predispositions-particularly, the resentment of changing social conditions.

For present research purposes, the attempt was made to assess respondent agreement with two statements regarding social change. The first such statement, "social problems result from the fact that we have gotten too far away from old moral standards" was employed by Furstenberg as part of a resentment of social change index. The second statement, "the population of (city) is growing too quickly" was thought to have special applicability to the present research situation, given the rapid rate of growth of many Alberta communities.

Table 9.9 presents associational measures for the relationships involving resentment of social change and perceptions of crime. All of the relationships are in the predicted direction. Yet, it is likely that the resentment of social change items are reflecting different dimensions of this underlying concept. Both items are related to subjective probability of victimization (assault), fear of assault and feelings of safety. But, only the city growth item is related to respondents' perception of the likelihood that someone in the neighbourhood will be held up or attacked and respondents' perception of the comparative safety of city. Similarly, the item concerning social problems and old moral standards is related to the concern with crime measure while the city growth item is not. Further, when first-order controls for primary status attributes are introduced the relationship involving moral standards and feelings of safety is reduced below statistical significance while the relationship involving the latter variable and the city growth item is not.

Thus, as Furstenberg suggested, resentment of social change does in fact seem to be related to a number of perception of crime measures. And, such resentment is seemingly related to perceptual dimensions which extend beyond concern with crime. It should, of course, be cautioned that the extent to which perceptions of crime represent a displacement of resentment of social change, is a question which is theoretically as well as methodologically salient.

Because of the number of small and inconsistent relationships involving secondary status characteristics and perceptions of crime, a multivariate perspective is provided in Table 9.10. Within the context of the multiple regression approach, many of the relationships which were previously noted cease to be of significance. This is particularly true with respect to media and residential factors. Overall, Table 9.10 suggests that secondary status characteristics are of relatively little importance in predicting perceptions of crime. The resentment of social change items may be exceptional in this regard.

The R^2s in Table 9.10 refer to the increment in the explained variation of the dependent variables which is attributable to the secondary status characteristics after the primary status attributes have been introduced into the regression equation.[4] Although the contribution to explained variation is significant in the majority of cases, it must be noted that these contributions are small and that generally speaking, the secondary status characteristics described in this study are not particularly valuable as predictors of perceptions of crime.

Secondary Status Characteristics: Variations in Effects Across Cities

In Chapter 3 the following hypothesis was advanced:

h5: The relationships involving secondary status characteristics and perceptions of crime will be differentially affected by the criminal environment of the larger social context.

Table 9.10

Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Secondary Status Characteristics: Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and Incremental R^2

		Perceptions of Crime								
		Subjective Probability of Victimization					Fear of Crime			
		Neighbourhood		City	Crimes		Neighbourhood		Crimes	Concern with Crime
		chance of serious crime	how likely someone attacked	chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	safe alone at night	break and enter	assault	
Media Factors										
newspapers	b =	-.542	.622	-.229*	-.107	-.123	-.745	-.658	.894	-.131
	beta =	-.025	.056	-.081	-.065	-.007	-.022	-.044	.049	-.048
television	b =	.436	-.169	-.200	.117	.297**	.243	-.191	.469	.322*
	beta =	.014	-.010	-.048	.048	.107	.048	-.086*	.017	.080
television news	b =	.107	.107	.827	.235	.171	.513	.473	.573	.349
	beta =	.074	.014	.044	.021	.001	.022	.047	.046	.019
Victimization	b =	-.962*	-.300	-.135	.473	.255	-.681	.611	-.438	-.128*
	beta =	.068	-.004	-.007	.043	.022	-.030	.006	-.036	-.071
Residential Factors										
long at address	b =	-.327	-.422	-.266	-.400	-.295	-.448	-.334	.118	.105**
	beta =	-.043	-.001	-.027	-.069	-.048	-.037	-.064	.018	.110
long in city	b =	-.218	-.264	.268	-.168	-.475	.125	-.213	.714	.130
	beta =	-.046	-.011	.043	-.046	-.012	.016	-.064	.018	.021
Resentment of Social Change										
social problems-	b =	.160	.205	.299	.973	.852*	-.665	.330	.569	-.156
old moral standards	beta =	.012	.029	.017	.009	.076	-.030	.034	.049	-.090
city is growing	b =	-.140	.321*	-.126***	.297	.554*	-.189***	.516	.881***	-.904
too quickly	beta =	-.018	.080	-.125	.050	.087	-.151	.010	.133	-.009
	R^2 =	.018	.012	.032***	.023	.029**	.030***	.027**	.027**	.033***

N = 824

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

The general nature of this hypothesis should not obscure the unique statement that is being made about each set of secondary status characteristics. In the case of media factors, it has been argued that cities will differ in the agenda-setting priority which their media assign to crime. Thus while media exposure may be weakly related to perception in the overall sample, such exposure may be more salient within particular urban contexts. With respect to victimization, it has been suggested that such experiences may sensitize individuals to the criminal environment and thus differentially affect perceptions across cities. Since cities differ in the degree to which they experience population growth and in the degree to which their crime levels are stable, it might be expected that length of residency in city may have influence upon perception only within some urban environments. Finally, in the case of resentment to social change, the argument has been made that such resentment may be a reaction to objectively changing social conditions. Thus, there may be operating a threshold effect such that perceptions of crime and resentment of social change may be related only within some urban settings.

Hypothesis h5 was tested through the employment of the chi square statistic, as discussed above. Three perception items which might be thought to show inter-city variation are included in the analysis . The items are subjective probability of victimization (city), fear of assault and concern with crime.

The across city chi square statistics are reported in

Table 9.11. These data suggest two significant relationships. The first concerns television viewing and concern with crime while the second involves subjective probability of victimization (city) and length of time in city.

Table 9.12 presents the across city correlational data relating to television viewing and concern with crime. It will be noted that higher levels of viewing are significantly related to higher levels of concern only in the cities of Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray.

The individual city correlational coefficients for length of residency in city and subjective probability of victimization (city) are found in Table 9.13. These variables are related only in Edmonton and Medicine Hat but interestingly, the relationships are in the opposite direction.

While these data do not convincingly demonstrate the value of a hypothesis of conditional influence, they do suggest the value of a more systematic pursuit of this line of inquiry in future research. Such research would require the collection of data relating to inter-city differences in media functions as well as information relating to the types and degrees of social change. The issue of across city comparisons will be raised again in the next chapter.

Social Actor Characteristics and Perceptions of Crime: Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has attempted through the use of correlation and regression techniques to determine the value of a number of

Table 9.11

Across City Comparisons: Chance of Serious Crime (City), Fear of Assault and Concern with Crime by Media Factors, Victimization, Length of Time in City and Resentment of Social Change: x^2

	chance of serious crime (city)	fear of Assault	concern with Crime
Media Factors			
newspapers	4.93	1.87	3.47
television	4.37	1.23	18.87**
television news	1.18	5.15	2.91
Victimization	4.77	6.70	2.43
Length of time in city	12.73*	3.58	2.78
Resentment of Social Change			
social problems - old moral standards	7.85	7.88	2.84
city is growing too quickly	6.50	.62	7.38

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 9.12

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Television Viewing and Concern with Crime by City: r

	Edmonton	Calgary	Lethbridge	Grande Prairie	Fort McMurray	Medicine Hat	Red Deer
	.041	-.037	.060	.299**	.256***	.144	-.128
n =	368	309	96	97	164	100	88

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 9.13

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Length of Time in City and Subjective Probability of Victimization (City) by City: r

	Edmonton	Calgary	Lethbridge	Grande Prairie	Fort McMurray	Medicine Hat	Red Deer
	-.131**	-.091	.046	-.134	.009	.180*	.152
N =	359	317	98	98	172	103	84

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

social actor characteristics as predictors of crime. This material is not easily summarized largely because the influence of such predictors varies dramatically with the nature of the perceptual indicator. The extent to which perceptions of crime are complex multidimensional phenomena becomes painfully obvious.

With respect to primary status attributes, these data suggest the relative predictive importance of sex. Socioeconomic status appears to be a less significant variable and age appears to be weakly related to some perception items in the direction opposite to that predicted. The failure of secondary controls to explain the relationships involving primary status attributes and perception, and the lack of across city differences involving those variables are taken as suggesting that perceptions of crime may be related to more fundamental status dimensions.

With respect to secondary status characteristics, the data are somewhat more confusing. In general, they suggest that such variables are relatively unimportant predictors of perception. A possible exception in this regard involves the variables relating to resentment of changing social conditions. Some data presented in this chapter may be thought to lend support to an hypothesis of conditional influence as discussed in Chapter 3. Although the evidence is not overwhelming in this regard, it does suggest possible value to be gained by more comprehensively investigating such questions.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Interestingly, the analysis involving the treatment of age as a continuous variable and perceptions of crime revealed similar findings to those reported in the body of this chapter.

[2] The precise formula for the computation of the relevant chi square is: $x^2 = \Sigma\ (n_i - 3)\ z^{1\ 2} - \frac{(\Sigma\ (n_i - 3)\ (z^1{}_i))^2}{\Sigma\ (n_i - 3)}$

Where z = the z transformation of the r statistic, n_i = the size of the independent samples. The distribution is for $K - 1$ degrees of freedom where k= the number of independent sample coefficients being compared.

[3] Tabular data, in this regard, indicated that roughly 54% of the victimization cases involved thefts while an additional 26% related to juvenile misbehaviour such as vandalism. An additional 16% was accounted for by miscellaneous (generally non-violent offences).

[4] The precise formula by which the determination is made regarding the incremental variation explained by the introduction of additional variables is:

$$F = \frac{\text{(incremental SS due to additional variables)}/M}{SS\ res/(N - k - 1)}$$

where k = the total nubmer of independent variables and M = the number of independent variables for which the test is made. Degrees of freedom for the F ratio are M and $(N - k - 1)$

To determine, for instance, if x_3 and x_4 added significantly to the variation in a dependent variable explained by x_1 and x_2, the following operational formula would be employed:

$$F = \frac{(R^2\ y.\ 1234 - R^2\ y\ .12)/M}{(1 - R^2\ y\ .1234)/(N - K - 1)}$$

(Nie et al, 1975).

CHAPTER 10

PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND THE CITY ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Chapter 4 provided an extensive discussion of the theoretical relationships which might be thought to exist between the larger social environment and perceptions of crime. Following the argument introduced by Conklin, it is possible to conceptualize the effects of city in terms of the influence of a "criminal environment". An effort was made in Chapter 4 to suggest how such a conceptualization maybe made more heuristically valuable by attempting to delineate with greater methodological precision the components of the criminal environment.

This chapter will introduce data relevant to these issues. Using the seven city[1] survey data, an attempt will be made to assess the predictive utility of city with respect to perceptions of crime. Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

h6: The variable, social environment, will have independent explanatory power with respect to perceptions of crime.

h7: The effect of social environment upon perceptions of crime results from the influence of numerous contextual characteristics associated with such environments.

Perceptions of Crime and City: Preliminary Data

Table 10.1[2] presents preliminary tabular data relating city of residence to a number of perception of crime measures.

Table 10.1

Distribution of Response to Perception Items Across Cities: Percentages of Respondents Providing Specified Responses

Item		Edmonton	Calgary	Fort McMurray	Grande Prairie	Red Deer	Medicine Hat	Lethbridge
How safe is "city with respect to the chances of serious crime?	N =	39.6 359	25.2 317	15.7 172	12.2 98	6.0 84	5.8 103	4.1 98
(percent "somewhat unsafe" or very unsafe")				x^2 = 120.69***				
Have the chances of being a victim of break and enter gone up, gone down or remained the same in recent years?	N =	77.5 374	72.5 320	58.8 170	74.7 99	69.0 87	77.2 101	76.2 101
(percent "gone up")				x^2 = 23.45***				
Have the chances of being a victim of assault gone up, gone down or remained the same in recent years? (percent "gone up")	N =	76.2 369	68.6 318	44.3 167	59.0 100	64.7 85	63.6 99	59.4 101
				x^2 = 56.62***				
Are you concerned or not concerned about the possibility of becoming a victim of break and enter? (percent "concerned")	N =	80.9 376	77.3 322	80.7 176	73.0 100	67.8 87	75.7 103	83.3 102
				x^2 = 11.36				
Are you concerned or not concerned about the possibility of becoming a victim of assault? (percent "concerned")	N =	67.3 370	50.5 325	50.3 175	41.8 98	40.2 87	48.5 103	50.0 100
				x^2 = 43.26***				
Concern Index (percent receiving highest score on index)	N =	19.0 373	15.3 313	13.0 169	13.4 97	9.1 88	14.9 101	21.6 97

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

For the purpose of the across city analysis, neighbourhood items have been omitted.

It may be that the most appropriate item for purposes of this analysis is the one relating to subjective probability of victimization (city). It will be noted in Table 10.1, that proportionally, the highest number of respondents perceiving their cities as unsafe reside in Edmonton and Calgary. Proportionally fewer respondents in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie share this perception and in the remaining communities, the number who perceive their cities as relatively unsafe is small indeed.

Whether or not these perceptions fit the objective facts of the criminal environment depends upon which set of objective facts one chooses to analyze. Tables 10.2 and 10.3 present crime rate data and population figures for each of the seven survey communities. As discussed in Chapter 4, such objective city characteristics might be thought to be related to the distribution of perception.

Yet, the relationships in this regard are not obvious. An examination of two-year rates of crimes against the person[3] (1977-1978) suggests that Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie and Edmonton have the highest rates of such offences while Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Lethbridge have the lowest rates. These data would seem to correspond to the distribution of perceptions of the city as unsafe. It will be noted, however, that Calgary is an exception in this regard. While the rate of crimes against the person is relatively low in Calgary, the proportional number of respondents who perceive their city as unsafe is relatively high.[4]

Table 10.2

Crimes Against the Person, Crimes Against Property, Other Criminal Code Violations and Total Criminal Code Violations: Two-Year Rates per 1000 Population by City, 1975-1978 †

Crimes Against the Person	Edmonton	Calgary	Lethbridge	Grande Prairie	Fort McMurray	Medicine Hat	Red Deer
1975-1976	11.6	6.3	5.3	12.0	17.1	5.1	7.3
1977-1978	10.9	5.7	5.8	10.1	14.8	5.4	7.1
Crimes Against Property							
1975-1976	79.0	63.9	62.2	75.8	75.6	62.8	66.4
1977-1978	83.3	58.1	58.7	77.4	71.2	67.3	72.9
Other Crimes							
1975-1976	27.2	18.5	27.8	43.6	46.1	22.7	39.7
1977-1978	24.7	14.6	26.8	35.2	39.1	25.7	42.2
Total							
1975-1976	117.8	88.6	95.0	131.4	138.7	90.1	113.3
1977-1978	118.8	78.3	91.3	122.4	125.1	98.4	122.1

† These data were compiled from Uniform Crime Reports which were supplied by the policing units responsible for each jurisdiction.

Table 10.3

Population Size and Percentage Population Increase by City, 1974-1978 †

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	Percentage Increase 1974-1978
Edmonton	445,691	451,635	461,559	471,474	478,066	7.2
Calgary	433,389	448,710	465,620	483,190	501,120	15.6
Lethbridge	43,612	44,522	46,752	48,975	50,628	16.1
Grande Prairie	15,359	16,618	17,626	17,629	18,429	20.0
Fort McMurray	11,000	13,393	15,425	20,340	25,580	132.5
Medicine Hat	27,430	30,174	32,811	33,200	33,220	15.5
Red Deer	28,079	30,107	32,184	33,717	36,314	29.3

† All data relating to population size were accessed through the Population Research Laboratory, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

It may be, as suggested in Chapter 4, that population size is of independent predictive importance with respect to perceptions of crime. As is evident from Table 10.3, Calgary has a large population (501,120) as does Edmonton (478,066). However, the population of cities with the lowest proportional number of respondents perceiving their cities as unsafe, are medium sized (Lethbridge, 50,628; Medicine Hat, 33,220; Red Deer, 36,314). It will also be noted that the cities of Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, which occupy intermediate positions in terms of proportional numbers of respondents perceiving the city as unsafe, are the smallest communities with populations of 25,580 and 18,429 respectively.

The data in Table 10.3 relating to percentage increase in populations between 1974 and 1978 further complicate the analysis. Fort McMurray has undergone the greatest increase in this period and Edmonton has undergone the least change. The remaining communities occupy intermediate positions in this regard.

Table 10.1 also presents data relating city of residence to a number of other perception items. In the case of subjective probability of victimization (break and enter), it appears that the proportional distribution of "gone up" responses does not exhibit great variation, despite the significant chi square. With respect to subjective probability of victimization (assault), the proportion of "gone up" responses ranges from a high of 76.27. in Edmonton to a low of 44.3 in Fort McMurray. Table 10.2 presents data concerning changes in two-year average rates of both crimes against the person and crimes against property, for the period 1975 to 1978. It will be noted that given the short time period, it is difficult to detect change. In fact, it appears that in a number of cases, the offense rates have declined. This fact becomes most evident upon examination of crime rate totals by city. Given the nature of the data, it is difficult to make even impressionistic judgments regarding the effects of crime rate stability upon perceived increases in the probability of victimization.

Also included in Table 10.1 are the city breakdowns for the items relating to fear of break and enter and fear of assault. While the former distribution is not statistically significant, the latter is, and suggests that the greatest proportional number of concerned respondents reside in Edmonton while the lowest number reside in Red Deer and Grande Prairie. The remaining communities occupy approximately equivalent intermediate positions.

The final perception item related to city in Table 10.1 is the concern index. With respect to this item, the proportional distribution of respondents receiving highest scores shows little variation across cities. The chi square statistic in this case does not reach statistical significance.

Despite their somewhat confusing nature, these preliminary data do suggest some general analytic issues. First, it seems that city is an important predictor of some perception items. Second, the relationship between the distribution of perception and the distribution of city characteristics is not obvious nor is it a question which is easily addressed in tabular form. Thus a multivariate approach is required. Finally, in order to determine more precisely the predictive influence of city, it is necessary to employ measures of association rather than tests of significance.

The remaining sections of this chapter will explore these issues in greater detail.

Perceptions of Crime and City: Dummy Variable Analysis

As mentioned above, in order to determine the degree to which city and perceptions of crime are related it is necessary to employ a measure of association. Of course, tests of significance such as chi square are inadequate to this task. Such tests merely indicate whether or not a relationship exists without addressing the issue of the strength or weakness of the relationship. Additionally, the chi square test of significance is affected by sample size such that in the case of large samples, a significant chi square may be indicative of a relationship which is actually quite weak (Blalock, 1972).

In order to measure the strength of association between city and the perception items presented in Table 10.1, a dummy variable analysis was undertaken. Such an analysis requires treating the categories of the original city variables as dichotomous independent variables.[5] Entering these dummy variables into the regression equation yields an R^2 which may be interpreted as the variation in the dependent variable which may be attributed to city.

The result of the dummy variable analysis are presented in Table 10.4. It will be noted that city explains approximately 18% of the variation in subjective probability of victimization (city). In addition, city explains a relatively small amount of variation in subjective probability of victimization (assault) and fear of assault.

It is of course possible that the significant relationships between city and perceptions of crime are brought about by the fact that status characteristics which are related to these perception items are themselves differentially distributed across cities. Thus, it is necessary to determine the extent to which city adds to the variation in perceptions of crime already explained by primary and secondary status characteristics.

These data are presented in Table 10.5. The R^2 measures in Table 10.5 represent the increments in explained variation which are attributable to city after the primary and secondary status characteristic variables have already been entered into the regression equation. Although the R^2's in Table 10.5 are of slightly lower value than those in Table 10.4, it is evident that the variable city makes significant contributions to the explained variation in the case of the subjective probability of victimization (city), subjective probability of victimization (assault) and fear of assault items.

Perceptions of Crime and City: Contextual Analysis

While the previous sections have indicated that the variable city has predictive value with respect to some perceptual items, an important question in this regard remains unanswered. It was hypothesized at the beginning of this chapter that the influence of

Table 10.4

Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by City: R^2

Subjective Probability of Victimization			Fear of Crime		Concern with Crime
City	Crimes		Crimes		
chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	break and enter	assault	
.181***	.015	.029***	.015	.049***	.012

N = 824

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 10.5

Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by City: Incremental R^2

Subjective Probability of Victimization			Fear of Crime		Concern with Crime
City	Crimes		Crimes		
chance of serious crime	break and enter	assault	1. break and enter	assault	
.159***	.013	.023***	.014	.048***	.012

N = 824

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

city upon perception is at least partially atributable to a number of objective features of the urban setting. These objective characteristics might be thought of as shaping or affecting the content of the criminal environment. While this issue was discussed briefly above, it is necessary to state with some greater precision the nature of these relationships.

Chapter 4 suggested that a number of specific characteristics of urban structure might be of importance in this regard. These variables included crime level, crime level stability, population size, population change, population heterogeneity and environmental deterioration.

For purposes of the present analysis three of these variables will be employed. The two-year rate of crimes against the person, 1977-1978 will serve as the measure of crime level. Population size (1978) and population change (1974-1978) are used as measures of population size and population increase respectively.

Measures of crime level stability, population heterogeneity and environmental deterioration are not included in the present analysis. In the case of crime level stability, the crime rate levels as presented in Table 10.2 do not exhibit sufficient variability to warrant inclusion. With respect to population heterogeneity, data limitations do not permit the employment of racial, ethnic or other relevant indicators of this concept. Similarly, the lack of useful and available measures of environmental deterioration prevent consideration of this variable. Thus, while the present examination does not provide an exhaustive test of the ideas presented in Chapter 4, it does allow a partial test.

The attempt to examine the effects which characteristics of the urban environment might have upon perceptions of crime is to employ a general research strategy known as a contextual analysis. As explained by Riley, a contextual analysis:

> focuses on the individual, but it locates and explains the individual's role with reference to its group context (1963: 702).

Thus, such ~~an~~ analysis attempts to explain the behaviour of individuals by characterizing them according to the properties of the groups to which they belong. For present purposes such an analysis is most effectively accomplished through the technique of multiple regression.

Data relating to the contextual analysis are presented in Table 10.6. With respect to the item, subjective probability of victimization (city), the b values suggest that both the rate of crime and population size are of predictive value. Population size is also related to the two remaining items in the predicted direction. With respect to subjective probability of victimization (assault), however, the b for rate of crimes against the person is not significant. In the case of all three items, population increase is related to the dependent variables in the direction opposite that which was predicted. However, in the case of subjective probability of victimization (city) the relationship is not significant.

It may be thought that a possible explanation of the anomalous relationship between population increase and indicators

Table 10.6

Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Population Size, Population Increase (1974-1978) and Two-Year rate of Crimes Against the Person (1977-1978): Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and R^2

	Subjective Probability of Victimization		Fear of Crime
	chance of serious crime (city)	assault	assault
Population Size			
b =	.224***	-.317*	-.593***
Beta =	.366	-.082	-.148
Population Increase			
b =	-.185	.151***	.235***
Beta =	-.102	.132	.198
Crimes Against the Person			
b =	.412***	-.646	-.129**
Beta =	.181	-.045	-.086
R^2 =	.153***	.021***	.039***

N = 824

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

of perception rests in a interaction effect involving length of residency in city. In other words, population increase may only affect perceptions, in the predicted direction, in the case of long-time residents in cities characterized by rapid growth. In order to investigate this notion, a multiplicative interaction term was entered into a regression equation containing the population increase and length of residency variables. As the data in Table 10.7 indicate, an interaction between these two independent variables does not add significantly to the explained variation in any of the perception items.

Further, some data presented earlier are also relevant within the present context. It was shown in Chapter 9 (Table 9.11) that the relationship between length of time in the city and perception of chance of serious crime (city) varied significantly by city. However, the city specific correlation coefficients presented in Table 9.13 indicate that length of residency is related to the dependent variable, in the predicted direction only in Medicine Hat, which has one of the lowest rates of population growth. In Fort McMurray which has the highest rate of such growth, the relationship is negligible (.009). Thus, we are left with an anomolous finding regarding the relationship between population growth and perceptions of crime.

Summary and Conclusion

The hypotheses presented at the beginning of this chapter are only partially supported by the data reported here.

Table 10.7

Multiple Regression Analysis: Perceptions of Crime by Length of Time in City, Population Increase and Interaction: Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and R^2

		Subjective Probability of Victimization		Fear of Crime
		chance of serious crime (city)	assault	assault
Length of time in city				
	b =	-.254	-.867	.243
	beta =	-.004	-.022	.060
Population Increase	b =	-.223	.160	.118
	beta =	-.123	.140	.099
	R^2 =	.015	.022	.010
Interaction Term				
	b =	-.252	-.626	.331
	beta =	-.015	-.060	.031
Incremental R^2	=	.000	.002	.000

N = 824

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

There is some evidence to suggest that city exerts an influence upon perceptions of crime independent of the characteristics of the residents who populate these cities. It is theoretically and conceptually useful to conceptualize these effects in terms of the influence of a criminal environment.

The present attempt to quantify the factors which influence the content of the criminal environment have met with only partial success. The data do suggest that population size has an influence on perception independent of rates of crime but as discussed, the relationships involving population increase are anomolous.

It is felt that examining the nature and consequences of the criminal environment through contextual analysis may prove to be a profitable line of inquiry. Whereas this research has focused upon city as the key explanatory variable, future research of a more systematic nature should more precisely define the parameters of the criminal environment. As discussed in Chapter 4, it may be that neighbourhoods or natural areas are perceptually more meaningful to respondents than city. The proper delineation of such areas in conjunction with the correct analytical utilization of information regarding the objective characteristics of these areas may add substantially to an understanding of the relationship between the criminal environment and perceptions of crime.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The survey cities exhibit some important differences which are not fully discussed in the body of the text. For instance, two of the cities (Edmonton & Clagary) are large metropolitan areas which in recent years have become important financial centres of a province-wide oil industry. The town of Fort McMurray has likewise undergone rapid urbanization as a result of the oil boom. As a production centre, however, it has attracted a large number of young adult males. The remaining cities (Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat and Red Deer) have rather stable populations and have not been dramatically affected by the boom in the Alberta oil business.

[2] The exact wording of the questions presented in Table 10.1 may be found in Appendix B.

[3] These data were gathered from Uniform Crime Report forms supplied by the individual policing units. The category, Crimes Against the Person, includes homicide, sexual offenses, assault (not indecent) and robbery. The Crimes Against Property category includes break and enter, theft of motor vehicle, theft over $200, theft under $200, having stolen goods and fraud. The category, Other Crimes, includes prostitution, gaming and betting, and other criminal code violations. These categories are derived from Cook and Daniel (1978).

[4] Silverman (1977) has argued that crime rate differences between Edmonton and Calgary are, no doubt in part, the products of differences in recording crime. Unfortunately, factors such as

recording patterns, are outside the realm of the present research effort.

[5] Actually, the number of dummy variables required is N - 1, where N = the number of categories in the original variable (Palumbo, 1977).

CHAPTER 11

PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND THEIR EFFECTS

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 5, a number of writers have suggested that the real value to be derived from a study of public perceptions of crime relates to an understanding of the effects which such perceptions have for social life. It has been argued that the public's fear of crime is dysfunctional for the social order in that it leads to a general decline in the quality of urban life (Conklin, 1975). The potentiality of such affects is a salient concern to both the policy maker and the sociological theorist.

This chapter will examine these issues by investigating the relationships existing between perceptions of crime, on the one hand, and interpersonal trust, defensive behaviour and community affect on the other.

Specifically it is hypothesized that:

h8: Differential perceptions of crime will produce differential effects with respect to defensive behaviour, community affect and interpersonal trust.

h9: The relationships involving perceptions of crime on the one hand and interpersonal trust, community affect and defensive behaviour on the other, will be differentially affected by the larger social environment.

Data relating to the former hypothesis will be presented in the next three sections which follow. Afterwards, the issue of inter-city differences, in this regard, will be examined.

Defensive Behaviour

The fact that exaggerated perceptions of crime may result in an increase in defensive behaviour does not, of course, automatically imply a negative consequence of such perception. If individuals engage in defensive behaviour designed to minimize the risk of victimization without increasing other social costs, such action is generally encouraged by policy makers and law enforcement officials. However, the concern has been expressed that members of the public who share exaggerated perceptions of crime are not necessarily likely to engage in socially constructive crime prevention action. Rather, they are likely to involve themselves in behaviours of an evasive nature. When members of the public choose to stay home rather than go out, because they feel that is is unsafe to do so, they deprive themselves of opportunities for meaningful social interaction. Such opportunity costs lead to a general worsening of the urban experience.[1]

In order to investigate these issues, two measures of defensive behaviour are employed in the present study. The first is a simple cumulative index constructed of dichotomous "yes-no" responses to a number of items which asked respondents whether or not they took a number of specific crime prevention measures.[2] Such measures are often referred to as "target hardening" techniques and in the short run, at least, they reduce the risk of victimization, without increasing social costs.

The second defensive behaviour item employed in the present study was designed to evoke a response relating to respondents' evasive behaviour. Subjects were asked "Have you recently wanted to go somewhere in your neighbourhood but stayed home instead because you thought it would be unsafe to go there?" The "yes-no" response pattern is treated as a dochotomous dependent variable.

The zero-order relationships involving these items and perceptions of crime are presented in Table 11.1. With respect to the index of defensive measures, it is clear from the data in Table 11.1 that perceptions of crime are generally unrelated to the frequency of taking such measures.

Table 11.1 also shows that evasive action is related to perceptions of crime, particularly, to those items which assess perception at the neighbourhood level. As might be expected, however, evasive action is not related to subjective probability of victimization (assault; break and enter) nor is it related to fear of break and enter.

Table 11.2 presents the incremental increases in explained variation in defensive behaviour, attributable to the perception items, after social status characteristics and city have been entered into the regression equation. With respect to the index of defensive measures, the small significant relationship involving subjective probability of victimization (city) persists. In the case of the evasive behaviour item, the relationships involving subjective probability of victimization (city) and fear of assault cease to be

Table 11.1

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Perceptions of Crime and Defensive Behaviour: r

	Defensive Behaviour	
	index of defensive measures	wanted to go somewhere
Subjective Probability of Victimization		
Neighbourhood		
chance of serious crime	.018	-.131**
how likely someone attacked	-.053	.269***
City		
chance of serious crime	.103**	-.099**
Crimes		
break and enter	.007	.028
assault	.042	.073
Fear of Crime		
Neighbourhood		
safe alone at night	.007	-.290***
Crimes		
break and enter	-.052	.044
assault	-.025	.143***
Concern with crime	.068	-.164***
$\overline{X}$ =	.95	.96
SD =	1.06	.30
Range =	0-5	1-2

N = 614

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 11.2

Multiple Regression Analysis: Defensive Behaviour by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2

	Defensive Behaviour	
	index of defensive measures	wanted to go somewhere
Subjective Probability of Victimization		
Neighbourhood		
chance of serious crime	.002	.013**
how likely someone attacked	.004	.058**
City		
chance of serious crime	.006*	.006
Crimes		
break and enter	.001	000
assault	000	.002
Fear of Crime		
Neighbourhood		
safe alone at night	.003	.048***
Crimes		
break and enter	.003	.001
assault	.004	.006
Concern with crime	.005	.020***

N = 614

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

significant. The neighbourhood perception items and concern with crime, however, persist in explaining significant but small proportions of variance in evasive behaviour.

These data suggest that perceptions of crime have relatively small effects in terms of the way in which they translate themselves into behavioural consequences. And, consistent with the concerns of policy makers, such perceptions seem more likely to result in evasive behaviour than in more constructive forms of victimization prevention.

Interpersonal Trust

Cohen (1966) has argued that one of the most dysfunctional consequences of crime is its effect on trust. As people perceive their environments as crime-ridden, they tend to lose faith that others will abide by the institutionalized expectations regarding appropriate behaviour. The actions of others come to be regarded as unpredictable and, as a result, social life becomes difficult.

The first measure of trust employed in the present study asked respondents to "agree" or "disagree" with the statement, "nice as it is to have faith in your fellow man, it seldom pays off". The zero-order effects of perception upon this measure of trust (Table 11.3) suggest a number of weak but significant relationships. When the question is phrased in terms of the increment in the explained variation in trust, which can be attributed to perception, all of the relationships except those involving subjective probability of victimization (city) and fear of assault cease to be significant

Table 11.3

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Interpersonal Trust and Perceptions of Crime: r

	Interpersonal Trust faith in fellow man
Subjective Probability of Victimization	
Neighbourhood	
chance of serious crime	-.156***
how likely someone attacked	.074
City	
chance of serious crime	-.027
Crimes	
break and enter	.011
assault	.057
Fear of Crime	
Neighbourhood	
safe alone at night	-.073*
Crimes	
break and enter	.092
assault	.190***
Concern with crime	-.083*
$\overline{X}$ =	1.64
SD =	.48
Range =	1-2

N = 614

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

(Table 11.4). In both cases, however, the proportion of explained variation is small.

A second trust item, relating to respondents' orientation at the neighbourhood level, is also employed in the present analysis. Subjects were asked, "Do you think that most of the people in your neighbourhood can be trusted?" The zero-order relationships involving this item and perceptions of crime (neighbourhood) are presented in Table 11.5. In all cases the relationships are significant and of moderate strength. It is evident from Table 11.6 that these perception items significantly contribute to the regression equations containing status characteristics and city.

Overall, these data suggest that in the case of interpersonal trust as in the case of defensive behaviour, there is evidence to confirm the possibility of dysfunctional effects. In both cases, however, the effects tend to be slight.

Community Affect

A third consequence which has been attributed to perceptions of crime concerns the adverse effects upon community affect. It is argued that as social actors perceive the environment as threatening, they will come to disfavourably view the environment. In the present study, this proposition is investigated at both the neighbourhood and the city level.

Two items are used as measures of neighbourhood affect. First, respondents were asked "would you some day like to move to another neighbourhood?" A second item asked respondents, "would you describe the attitude of your neighbours towards strangers from

Table 11.4

Multiple Regression Analysis: Interpersonal Trust by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2

	Interpersonal Trust faith in fellow man
Subjective Probability of Victimization	
Neighbourhood	
chance of serious crime	.019***
how likely someone will be attacked	.002
City	
chance of serious crime	.000
Crimes	
break and enter	.001
assault	.005
Fear of Crime	
Neighbourhood	
safe alone at night	.004
Crimes	
break and enter	.007
assault	.030***
Concern with crime	.002

N = 614

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Table 11.5

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Neighbourhood Trust and Perceptions of Crime: r

	Neighbourhood Trust people in neighbourhood trusted
Subjective Probability of Victimization	
chance of serious crime	.266***
how likely someone attacked	-.250***
Fear of Crime	
safe alone during night	.265***
$\bar{X}$ =	1.09
SD =	.29
Range =	1-2

N = 614

Table 11.6

Multiple Regression Analysis: Neighbourhood Trust by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2

	Neighbourhood Trust people in neighbourhood trusted
Subjective Probability of Victimization	
chance of serious crime	.067***
how likely someone attacked	.053***
Fear of Crime	
safe alone at night	.060***

N = 614

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

outside the neighbourhood as friendly or unfriendly?" Both items are treated as dichotomous variables.

Table 11.7 suggests that overall, perceptions of crime at the neighbourhood level are weakly but significantly related to neighbourhood affect. When the perception items are entered at the final stages of their respective regression equations, the relationship between chance of serious crime (neighbourhood) and the second measure of neighbourhood affect ceases to be significant. The remaining relationships, significant at the zero-order level, are still significant in terms of the more complex regression equations (Table 11.8) but, as was the case with defensive behaviour and interpersonal trust, the proportions of variation explained by perceptions of crime are small.

As mentioned, the relationship involving perceptions of crime and community affect is also assessed at the city level. Again, two items are employed. First, respondents were asked, "On the whole, do you like living in (city)?" In addition, respondents were asked, "Do you think that (city) is a good place to raise children?" Both items are treated as dichotomous dependent variables.

These items are related to the one city-specific perception item in Table 11.9. Both relationships are significant. Again, the contribution of perception to explained variation continues to be significant in terms of the more complex regression equations (Table 11.10). Yet consistent with other data presented in this chapter, the effects of perception upon community affect at the city level are small.

Table 11.7

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between Neighbourhood Affect and Perceptions of Crime: r

	Neighbourhood Affect	
	like to move to another neighbourhood	are neighbours friendly or unfriendly
Subjective Probability of Victimization		
chance of serious crime	-.210***	.092*
how likely someone attacked	.048	-.094*
Fear of Crime		
safe alone at night	-.026	.121**
$\bar{X}$ =	1.61	1.18
SD =	.49	.38
Range =	1-2	1-2

N = 614

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 11.8

Multiple Regression Analysis: Neighbourhood Affect by Perceptions of Crime: Incremental R^2

	Neighbourhood Affect	
	like to move to another neighbourhood	are neighbours friendly or unfriendly
Subjective Probability of Victimization		
chance of serious crime	.030***	.006
how likely someone attacked	.001	.008*
Fear of Crime		
safe alone at night	.002	.008*

N = 614

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 11.9

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between City Affect and Chance of Serious Crime (City): r

	City Affect	
	like living in city	good place to raise children
chance of serious crime (city)	.193***	.331***
$\underline{\overline{x}}$ =	1.09	1.17
$\underline{\overline{SD}}$ =	.29	.38
$\underline{\overline{Range}}$ =	1-2	1-2

N = 614

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 11.10

Multiple Regression Analysis: City Affect by Chance of Serious Crime (City): Incremental R^2

	City Affect	
	like living in city	good place to raise children
chance of serious crime (city)	.016**	.062***

N = 614

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

Across City Comparisons: Community Dimensions and the Effects of Perception

Hypothesis h9 suggests the possibility that the relationships involving perceptions of crime and the consequences of perception may be differentially affected by the larger social context. For the purpose of the present analysis and consistent with the approach used in earlier chapters, social context is operationalized as city.

The idea that the manner in which perceptions of crime produce effects is dependent upon the larger social context emerges out of Conklin's comparative analysis of perceptions of crime and their consequences in Port City and Belleville. He found that, in general, perceptions of crime were related to the dependent variables of interest, in the high crime rate community of Port City but not in the low crime rate community of Belleville. His theoretical interpretation suggested that such relationships come about only when the criminal environment reaches a particular level of intensity. Thus, there is, according to Conklin, a threshold effect operating, such that perceptions of crime have dysfunctional consequences only within particular contexts.

The concept of a threshold effect was elaborated in Chapter 5. It was suggested that such effects may be brought about by factors other than, though not excluding, the rate of crime. Such factors could include the stability of crime levels, social heterogeneity, rate of population change, population size and environmental deterioration.

Within the context of the present analysis, an attempt is made to assess the influence of city upon the relationships involving perceptions of crime and the dependent variables, by employing the chi square goodness of fit for intercorrelational differences. This statistic, as discussed earlier, indicates the probability that independent correlation coefficients are representative of the same population relationships. The perception of crime items employed in this analysis are chance of serious crime (city) and fear of assault. The indicator of evasive defensive behaviour, the two measures of city affect and the general indicator of interpersonal trust are the dependent variables.

The chi square statistics for these across city comparisons are presented in Table 11.11. These data suggest that only one relationship involving perceptions of crime and the dependent variables significantly differs by city. Specifically, the relationships involving respondents' perceptions of comparative safety of the city with respect to the chance of serious crime and respondents' perceptions of the city as a "good place to raise children" appears to be affected by the larger social context.

The city-specific correlation coefficients in this regard are presented in Table 11.12. It will be noted that the relationships involving these variables reach significance in Edmonton, Calgary, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray. These communities are of varying size and have experienced varying rates of growth. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 10, these cities, with the exception of Calgary, are characterized by the higher rates of serious crime. Conklin's concept of a threshold effect appears to suggest a meaningful interpretation of these data.

Table 11.11

Across City Comparisons: Defensive Behaviour, City Affect and Interpersonal Trust by Chance of Serious Crime (City) and Fear of Assault: x^2

	Defensive Behaviour	City Affect		Interpersonal Trust
	wanted to go somewhere	like living in city	good place to raise children	faith in fellow man
chance of serious crime (city)	9.52	9.95	21.05**	6.81
fear of assault	7.03	6.87	6.92	5.95

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Table 11.12

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients between "City" is a Good Place to Raise Children and Chance of Serious Crime (City) by City: r

	Edmonton	Calgary	Lethbridge	Grande Prairie	Fort McMurray	Medicine Hat	Red Deer
	.183***	.258***	-.033	.217**	.353***	-.041	-.058
n =	326	306	94	95	157	98	82

* p <.05
** p <.01
*** p <.001

With respect to the remaining variables in this analysis, there is an absence of threshold effects. The examination of city-specific coefficients revealed little in the way of significant results and even less in terms of theoretically predicted patterns.

Summary and Conclusions

Overall, the data presented in this chapter provide partial support for the research hypotheses. There is some evidence that perceptions of crime do result in pathological defense mechanisms, a weakening of trust and a lessening of affect at both the neighbourhood and city levels. However, the effects in this regard are generally quite small. Claims as to the socially destructive nature of crime in terms of its resulting social atomism and destruction of community may be overstated. In general, these data appear to support the claim made by Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garafolo (1978) that, the behavioural effects of crime or the fear of crime appear more as subtle adjustments in behavior than as major shifts in what ought to be called behavioural policies.

It is, of course, entirely possible that the "facts of crime" in the cities surveyed are not salient enough to produce the theoretically predicted results. Possibly, as crime levels and other sources of social change increase, the effects upon trust, community affect and social isolation may become more damaging. With respect to the present research context at least, social disintegration resulting from differential perceptions of crime seems unlikely.

With respect to the second hypothesis discussed in this chapter, the failure to locate generalized threshold effects may suggest the extent to which the empirical bases of the influence of the criminal environment are not yet understood. Conklin's comparison of two communities--one with a very low and one with a very high rate of crime--probably presents an overly simplistic model of the effects of such environments.

FOOTNOTES

[1] These arguments are discussed in detail by Conklin (1975) and Wilson and Brown (1973).

[2] These items included buying or installing the anti-theft alarm systems; light timers; deadbolt locks; through-frame pins or rods on sliding doors and membership in operation identification.

CHAPTER 12

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS I: THE THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME

Introduction

In earlier chapters of this work, an attempt was made to formulate and empirically assess a number of specific hypotheses regarding both the determinants and consequences of differential perceptions of crime. The tendency has been to treat the study of public perception as a specialized area within a more general sociology of crime and deviance. While this is consistent with the treatment usually found in the literature, it should be noted that such specialization may in a sense be detrimental to the more general concerns of the discipline. Too often, there is a tendency in the sociology of crime and deivance (as in most other areas of sociology) to develop sub-specialties without attempting to understand how the empirical and theoretical issues which emerge from the study of such topics have implications for the wider body of criminological theory.

The present chapter will attempt to correct this oversight by demonstrating the relevance of the study of public perceptions of crime to more central themes in the sociology of crime and deviance. For purposes of presentation, the following discussion will centre around three important issues in theoretical criminology; the definition of crime, the etiology of crime and the effects of crime.

The Definition of Crime

It is well known that traditional mainstream criminology has not made problematic the nature of nonconformist conduct. Within the consensus paradigm, little attention is paid to the manner in which behaviours and categories of actors come to be selected for criminalization. Since within this paradigm, criminal law is thought to represent a consensus regarding major social values, the important social scientific problem involves attempting to understand the nature of the sociological and social psychological factors which produce deviation from this consensus.

Increasingly, however, with the emergence of the labelling perspective in the 1960's, criminological attention began to focus upon questions concerning the nature of nonconformist conduct *per se*. Labellists argued that the manner in which behaviour is criminalized should be an important theoretical concern of the sociology of crime and deviance. The assumption of consensus as a basis of criminal law was rejected as labelling proponents advocated a more relativistic position on the nature of nonconformity. Becker provided the classic statement in this regard:

> Social groups create deviance by making rules whose infractions constitute deviance and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom the label has been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label (1963: 9).

According to Becker and others (Platt, 1969; Gusfield, 1967), rule creation comes about as a result of the actions of interested societal members who perceive the deviance as threatening important group values. It is argued that such "moral entrepreneurship" (Becker, 1963) has as consequences the invitation of public outrage and the mobilization of public sentiment. The result is the creation of a new category of deviance and a new group of deviant actors.

Despite its emphasis upon a relativistic and conflictual model of the manner in which deviance is created, labelling theorists still maintained an interest in the etiology of such behaviour. In this regard, they argued that complex forces of societal reaction lead stigmatized actors to become engulfed in deviant roles (Lemert, 1951; Scheff, 1966). Thus, from the labelling perspective both the status and the cause of nonconformity are to be understood with reference to social power, social conflict and the coercive abilities of social control agencies.

The efforts on the part of labelling theorists to make problematic the nature of law and social control encouraged scholars during the 1960's and 1970's to more fully explore the conflictual and relativistic bases of law and social control. These theorists who came to be associated with the newly emerging school of conflict criminology focused almost exlusive attention upon the theoretical importance of power, conflict and group interest in the creation of nonconformity. Within this framework, issues of etiology became less salient. According to Hagan, conflict theory:

> adds to the labelling theorists interest in the application of labels a more detailed concern for the role of self-interested groups in the development of legal labels in the first place. The assumption that underwrites this approach is that various

> groups have specific interests in laws that require the imposition of labels and that these groups, therefore, play an active role in guiding particular legal labels through the law-making process. In this way, dominant societal groups are seen as imposing disrepute on the activities of subordinate groups (1977: 123).

Conflict theory, in its many forms has given expression to a number of theoretical positions. However, two major styles of thought may be distinguished. First, some versions of conflict theory posit a conflictual yet pluralistic model of society in which the bases of power are conceptualized as shifting and diffuse. This view may be contrasted with a more Marxian model of law and society, which locates the bases of social power and thus social control in the relationships of economic production. Within this latter framework, the creation and treatment of deviance are seen as tools which serve the interests of a capitalist elite (Chambliss, 1975; Spitzer, 1975; Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973).

An example of the former, more conservative brand of conflict theory is found in the early work of Richard Quinney (1970). According to Quinney, both the creation and manifestation of crime must be understood as parts of a complex social reality of crime, which emerges out of the conflict inherent in power relationships. The analysis, provided by Quinney, allocates a central theoretical role to criminal conceptions which he defines as images "about the meaning of crime, the nature of the criminal and the relationship of crime to the social order" (1970: 277). The similarity between this conceptualization and public perceptions of crime requires no elaboration. It does, however, suggest the extent to which Quinney's work is relevant to the present dicussion.

According to Quinney, the criminal conceptions of the socially powerful form the basis for the social reality of crime since:

> these are the segments that impose their views and actions on others in the name of the whole society (1970: 302).

Quinney argues that conceptions of crime are diffused throughout society, that is from the socially powerful segments to the public-at-large, primarily through the mass communication. Despite evidence to the contrary, Quinney asserts that:

> (mass) communications do make a difference. My argument reinterpreting the thesis of the effects of mass media is that a specific kind of crime coverage in the media provides the source for building criminal conceptions. A conception of crime is presented in the mass media. That conception, diffused throughout the society, becomes the basis for the public's view of reality. Not only is a symbolic environment created within the society but personal actions take their reference from that environment. Indeed, the construction of a conceptual reality is also the creation of a social reality of actions and events (1970: 285).

The theme of public perceptions of crime as a reflection of ruling class ideology has also been taken up by those writers who subscribe to a more Marxian interpretation of law and society. The argument associated with this position is that public perceptions of crime are based upon capitalist mythology as presented by mass media and other agencies of socialization. The position is advanced that it is to the advantage of capitalist interests to promote a public fear of crime. Such "organized paranoia" (Hartjen, 1977) justifies the expansion of social control apparatus and diverts attention away from capitalist excesses. Additionally, the identification of criminality with particular racial stereotypes creates inter-racial discord which mitigates against the development of a cohesive working class.

According to Marxian conflict theorists, those critics who have challenged the argument's central tenets, by empirically demonstrating that there is a public consensus regarding the seriousness of crime (Thomas, 1976; Gibbons, 1969) have, in essence, obscrued the issue. They suggest that these data may be interpreted not as disproof of the conflict argument but rather as evidence of the effectiveness of ideological hegemony. Within this framework, public perceptions of crime represent a false consciousness since the conflict involves a struggle of interests, not of perceptions or attitudes (Michalowski and Bohlander, 1976; Sniden, 1980).

Despite the differences, the labelling and conservative and radical conflict positions, all ask common questions which are of interest in the present context. Specifically, what theoretical meanings may be attributed to the perceptions of crime held by members of the general public and, how are these perceptions derived from an influential set of social experiences.

Each of these theoretical positions asks and attempts to answer these questions in a somewhat different way. For the labellists, the content of public perceptions is conceptualized in terms of stereotyped expectations and proscriptive orientations (Simmons, 1975). Such perceptions, it is argued, are grounded in persuasive moral entrepreneurship. But clearly, successful moral entrepreneurship does not take place in a social vacuum. Rather, this social process, like any other, occurs within and must be understood in relation to a context of existing public moods and perceptual predispositions.

The theoretical understanding of public perceptions of crime which is provided by the conflict theorists, differs somewhat from that suggested by the labellists. With respect to this perspective, interest centres around the content of social institutions, the relationship of this content to elite interests and the ability of these institutions to effectively maintain ideological control over public sentiment.

It is acknowledged that a great deal of theoretical refinement is necessary before these abstract conceptualizations can be translated into specific empirical hypotheses. However, this discussion makes clear the fact that the theoretical and empirical issues discussed in earlier chapters are not solely the concern of a specialized subarea of criminology. Rather, they are issues which bear upon questions central to theoretical criminology.

The Etiology of Crime

The public is a concept which has not been frequently employed in sociological explanations of crime and deviance.

Generally, such explanations have focused attention upon factors of more direct relevance to the life of the actor or, upon the more abstractly defined social structure. However, it can be argued that most modern sociological explanations of crime do in fact make implicit assumptions about the role played by the public (and, the public's perceptions of crime)in processes of crime causation. If the issue of public perception of crime is viewed as a common conceptual theme running throughout modern causal arguments, then a more complete understanding of this issue may provide the basis for understanding the manner in which these various explanations might be integrated. This point may require some elaboration.

Modern theories of criminogenesis offer a wide array of approaches to the question of what causes crime. And, this diversity is reflected in a variety of concepts which enjoy popular currency. Among the most popular etiological concepts in modern sociological explanations of crime are social control, opportunity, and societal reaction. Each is representative of a differing line of scientific reasoning and each emerges from a differing criminological tradition. Yet, each is itself, or is closely related to, a conceptualization of public perceptions of crime.

Arguments of the social control variety, for instance, assume many forms (Nettler, 1978; Empey, 1978). Psychological versions of control theory are provided by Eysenck (1964) and Trasler (1962) while the work of Hirschi (1969), Hindelang, (1973) and Nye (1958) is characterized by a social psychological orientation. Newman (1972) and others, conceptualize the control issue in environmental terms.

Despite their variety, all versions of control theory share a common assumption, in that they argue that criminologists need not seek motivation to commit crime. Rather, they suggest, crime is something which emerges in the absence of factors which contain or control it. It is quite possible, of course, to conceptualize public perceptions of crime in social control terms since one level of social control is that which is exerted at the informal level of the community. Wilson (1975), for instance, suggests that social control is the essence of community. In areas characterized by a homogeneity of values, he argues, there is a subtle pressure to conform which each community resident exerts and to which each community resident is subject. Community, as social control, Wilson suggests, is an important factor in the suppression of criminal conduct. Similar suggestions regarding the relationships between community and social control have also been made by Lind (1930), Clinard and Abbot (1973) and Boggs (1971).

The argument has been made by Conklin (1975) Wilson (1975) and others that some types of public perceptions of crime are actually destructive to the community as social control. Their argument, as discussed in earlier chapters, is that as community residents become increasingly afraid of crime, they withdraw socially. This social atomism may result in a decline in meaningful social interaction and as a result the community as social control is weakened. It would seem that to fully understand the social control argument it is necessary to understand the manner in which perceptions of crime become exaggerated and how this exaggeration produces the effects which are attributed to it by these writers.

If the social control approach to understanding crime is viewed as conservative, then the labelling perspective offers a far more liberal approach to crime causation. As discussed, the labelling approach argues that it is societal reaction which produces crime by stigmatizing actors and locking them into social roles. It is obvious that to ask questions about societal reaction is to ask questions about the way in which the public perceives crime and why it responds to crime as it does. Yet, the criticism can be raised that labelling theorists have not paid sufficient attention to the content of societal reaction, that is, to public perception. Nor, given the social psychological bias of the perspective, have these theorists devoted sufficient attention to the fact that the entire process of labelling is itself a variable and thus responsive to the larger social context. In this regard, Davis has written that labelling theory:

> as practiced, has been largely astructural, ahistorical and noncomparative (1975: 453).

Similarly, Carey notes:

> To date, the labelists have tended to focus their attention on microlevel problems to the exclusion of broader structural questions. The emphasis has been on control institutions and their activities on the one hand, or the social psychological import of reactions to deviance on the other. This neglect might be remedied by historical research into "deviance production" under different social conditions (1978: 121-122).

Thus, just as public perceptions of crime may vary across communities so might the structure and dynamics of the labelling process.

Further, it would seem that what the public thinks and feels about crime will have consequences for the process of societal reaction as the labelling theorists conceptualize it. The nature and intensity of public perceptions of crime should directly affect the manner in which social actors respond to offenders. And, it should be expected to affect the pressures and constraints which are placed upon formal agencies of social control. The importance of this latter point is suggested by studies of reactive policing (Black and Reiss, 1967) which demonstrate the importance of a link between the public's view of crime and the criminal and the likelihood of the invocation of the criminal justice process.

Another frequently used concept in modern sociological explanations of crime is opportunity. Although the concept did not originate with Merton, (1938), it was he who provided the most eloquent statement in this regard. In modern usage the concept of opportunity is employed with reference to the denial of legitimate opportunity or the provision of illegitimate opportunity. With respect to the opportunity concept, the link to public perceptions is less obvious but relevant nonetheless.

The concept of illegitimate opportunity has to some extent already been discussed in social control terms. If the fear of crime does in fact weaken community and thereby lessen social control such social conditions may provide a basis for the development of systems or structures of illegitimate opportunity. An important additional question however, concerns the manner in which potential offenders come to perceive such illegitimate opportunities. Some suggestions in this regard have already been provided Carter and Hill (1978) and Scarr (1973).

The role which legitimate opportunity plays in the promotion of criminal conduct has of course been a central theme in modern sociological arguments. Simply stated, the contention is that certain groups in society may be deprived of legitimate avenues to success goals and that such blocked opportunity may result in the exploration of nonconformist alternatives. Of course, the factors which deny minority groups upward mobility are complex indeed and an understanding of them requires an understanding of the very bases of the society's stratification system. Yet, these factors may not be unrelated to perceptions of crime in that such perceptions no doubt play a role in anti-minority group feeling. The manner in which anti-minority group feeling and perceptions of crime are related has of course yet to be determined. There are however, tentative data to suggest the presence of such a relationship. In his analysis of public opinion data collected in Baltimore for instance, Furstenberg (1971) found concern with crime to be highest among whites most antagonistic to racial reform. In his very insightful examination of the history of Mafia imagery in the United States, Smith (1975) suggests that at least in part the Mafia stereotype emerged out of an anti-Italian sentiment. Additional examples of a link between criminal and racial stereotypes are found in Cook's (1969) analysis of "drug fiend mythology" and anti-asiatic sentiment and, Ianiello's (1974) discussion of anti-semitism. It might be suggested that as the stereotype of the criminal and the minority stereotype blend in the public mind, the former may reinforce the latter to further justify and intensify anti-minority feeling and the denial of access to legitimate opportunity.

The Effects of Crime

A comprehensive sociology of crime and deviance must be concerned with the effects as well as the causes and definition of nonconformist behaviour. Since its inception, however, sociological criminology has been almost exclusively interested in crime, as the dependent variable. Considerably less attention has been devoted to a theoretical understanding of the effects of crime on the social system.

It is of course legitimate to ask if perception is the variable which intervenes between crime and its effects and if it is therefore, the heuristic mechanism by which the effects of crime may be understood. Such a conceptualization is problematical for at least two reasons. First, as evidence presented in earlier chapters suggests, perceptions of crime are to some extent at least, a reflection of perceptual orientations to phenomena other than crime. Second, perceptions of crime seem to be only imperfectly related to actual crime levels. Yet, as discussed, data bearing on both of these issues are somewhat inconsistent. Despite such problems, arguments presented in Chapter 5 suggest that the study of perception does constitute one methodology with which the effects of crime issue may be addressed. Of course, the more general theoretical issues involved in such analyses relate to the functional nature of crime. As discussed, there is a vast literature relating to the degree to which crime has consequences for and against organization (Cohen, 1966). Perceptual data may provide a means through which hypothesized relationships, in this regard, may be empirically assessed.

A concern with effects of crime issues is not restricted to functionalist theory, however. Such issues are relevant within the context of labelling theory as well. For the labellist, effects flow from the images of crime which are communicated by the moral entrepreneur and perceived and shared by members of the public. How actors are selected for official processing, the type of behaviour which elicits reaction and the strength of the control reaction may all be conceptualized as consequences which flow from differential perceptions of crime. As Quinney notes:

> Reaction to all that is associated with crime initially rests upon knowledge about crime. Likewise perceptions of the crime phenomenon underlies any social reaction to crime. How a person perceives crime provides a framework for his understanding of and subsequent reaction to crime (1970 : 279).

Likewise, more radical versions of conflict theory must be interested in the effects which flow from officially defined but publicly shared definitions of crime and criminals. Within this framework, however, interest would centre around the extent to which such perceptions have consequences which are consistent with and supportive of the interests of the economic elite. Research could allow for an empirical assessment of the relationships existing between perceptions of crime and support for expansion of the social control apparatus of the state (Block, 1971). Additionally, empirical effort could be directed toward an examination of the degree to which perceptions of crime promote intraclass disharmony and impede the development of class consciousness.

The issues raised here are theoretically complex and the parameters of analysis are, as yet, poorly defined. However, it is evident that the consequences which flow from crime and from more nebulous perceptions of this phenomenon pose questions which are salient to a number of general theoretical positions in criminology.

Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate the relevance which the study of public perceptions of crime has for a number of key theoretical issues in criminology. This was accomplished by outlining three major theoretical areas within theoretical criminology and suggesting possible theoretical links between each area and the study of perception.

Such theorizing is still in a seminal stage and the possibilities of rigorous empirical test are not immediate. Nonetheless, the material presented here suggests interesting theoretical possibilities which require further research attention.

CHAPTER 13

FUTURE CONSIDERATION II: THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME

Introduction

The preceding chapters have discussed public perceptions of crime as phenomena relating primarily to the concerns of theoretical scholarship. It has been argued that the analysis of public perceptions raises a number of questions which are of central concern to theoretical sociology and criminology. In contrast, the present chapter addresses the relevance of the study of public perceptions of crime to the pragmatic concerns of public policy. It will be argued that the practical utility of such research and theory can best be understood by making reference to the perspective advanced in the field of study known as social indicators research (Sheldon and Freeman, 1970; Kennedy, Northcott and Kinzel, 1978).

Perceptions of Crime as Social Indicators

In recent years, sociologists and urban planners have become increasingly interested in understanding and developing systems of indicators relating to "environmental health" and the "quality of life". In general terms, according to Bunge,

> An indicator is a token or symptom of some condition. Thus, paleness may indicate bad health and a high unemployment figure, a sick economy. There is no such thing as an indicator in itself; every indicator points to or is a token of something else. (1975: 66).

With respect to the issue of urban quality, specifically, it is argued that the complexities of modern social life require:

> an accurate and comprehensive description of "environmental quality" for residential areas in terms of its major components (Carp, Zawadski and Shokrkon, 1976: 240).

The use of social indicator models in criminology has generally been restricted to the computation and the analysis of crime rates. The assumption has been implicit that such rates indicate the nature of seriousness of the "crime problem" within a given social setting and are thus symptomatic of community well-being.

Yet, from a critical standpoint, the use of such rates, as indicators, is problematic. To begin with, crime rates, whether official or unofficial, are plagued by serious problems of reportability (Nettler, 1978; Hagan, 1977; Silverman and Teevan, 1975). Despite the fact such rates underreport (and in some cases overreport) the incidence of criminality, they are usually quoted by law enforcement personnel, social planners and politicians as empirical evidence of the level of severity of the community's problem with crime.

In addition, rates of crime, even if accurately computed, may serve as inadequate indicators of harm done to community. For instance, in the United States, the F.B.I. regularly published statistics on what are known as Index Crimes. The statistical fluctuation of the reported incidence of these most socially destructive offenses supposedly indicates major trends in the crime problem. As Dewolf (1976) notes, however, impaired driving results in a greater loss of life and, fraud and embezzlement result in a greater loss of of property than do all of the index crimes combined. Yet, the

F.B.I. does not include impaired driving, fraud or embezzlement in its periodic reports of trends in serious crime.

An additional reason why objective measures of crime rate may serve as poor indicators of the crime problem is suggested by Balkin who argues that low rates of crime may be brought about by a reduction in the willingness of members of the public to expose themselves to conditions of victimization risk. Thus:

> If the crime or victimization rate falls (holding population size constant) because people feel so unsafe that they lock themselves inside their homes at night, police may feel that they have been doing a good job because their workload eases. Yet, citizens continue to feel unsafe and very vulnerable to crime (1979: 344).

In other words, since low rates of crime may be brought about by a situation in which the citizenry is afraid to venture out into the streets after dark, it is evident that low rates of crime are not necessarily indicative of a lessening of the level of seriousness of the crime problem.

Since, however, the tendency does exist to indicate the extent and the seriousness of crime by computing rates of serious crime, it is meaningful to ask exactly what is meant by seriousness in this context. Hagan (1977) suggests that the concept of seriousness denotes three distinct, yet related dimensions. First, such acts are designated as socially quite harmful. Second, there is a high degree of consensus about the norms which prohibit such acts. Finally, such acts elicit a severe social response. Interestingly, all of these dimensions are predicated upon a conceptualization of public perception of crime. Thus, seriousness is ultimately a perceptual matter. It would seem obvious, then, that a direct investigation of public perception would provide equally viable indictors of the seriousness of and trends in the crime problem.

There has, however, been surprisingly little criminological interest in the use of subjective social indicators. However, this disinterest is consistent with a trend which has characterized social indicators research in general. (Rodgers and Converse, 1975; Andrews and Withey, 1974).

Yet, a number of researchers have, in fact, expressed the position that subjective quality of life indicators are in many ways preferable to those of a more objective nature. According to Schneider, for instance:

> objective social indicators cannot be taken as direct measures of the welfare of the quality of life experienced by individuals. (1976: 303).

Similarly, Andrews (1974) argues that subjective indicators are preferable to objective indicators for a number of reasons. For instance, subjective indicators provide direct measures of individuals' evaluation of their own well-being. In addition, subjective indicators permit the making of cross-sector comparisons, which are necessary for resource allocation. Such comparisons are not easily made by employing objective measures in that these measures involve the counting of non-comparable entities. According to Andrews, the employment of subjective measures also allows for a consistent check on the adequacy of a range of objective indicators.

These arguments would seem to suggest that great utility, of a practical type, may be gained by focusing attention directly upon perceptual indicators relating to crime. It is recognized, of course, that such perceptual indicators provide an information set quite distinct from that which is revealed in the more traditional and more objective measures of criminality. As discussed in previous chapters, such perceptions are likely to be affected by perceptual predispositions to other aspects of the social and physical environment. Since members of the public do not divide social reality in the same categories as do the academic criminologists, such perceptions may be thought of as being, in a sense, contaminated by non-crime related cognitions and feelings. As Wilson (1975) states, the concern with crime is largely a concern with improper behaviour in public places. However, such contaminating influences do not make these perceptions of crime any less real to the actors involved; nor do they decrease the value of these perceptions as social indicators. In this regard, Garafolo and Laub write, that from a quality of life perspective:

> the fear of rape, robbery, assault and burglary is simply a dramatic reflection of the disrupted sense of community, which is also reflected in worries about changing cultural or racial composition of one's neighborhood, the opening of an "X-rated" movie theater, the visibility of drug users or alcoholics on the city streets and so forth (1978: 249).

Thus, precisely because perceptions of crime may indicate a general level of anxiety regarding the nature of community, they are useful as indicators of the quality of life within community. The small but significant effects which perceptions of crime have upon trust, defensive behaviour and community affect suggest the extent to which such perceptions may in fact have direct consequences for the quality of urban existence.

The treatment of perceptions of crime as social indicators suggests that such perceptions may be regarded as a means to an end. In other words, such perceptions may be conceptualized as signals regarding the more general and more abstractly defined quality of life. However, this treatment raises a number of other questions concerning perceptions of crime *per se*, as a policy issue. It is to a consideration of such questions that the next section is addressed.

Perceptions of Crime and Social Policy

Thus far, it has been argued that objective crime measures (such as the crime rate) and subjective crime measures (such as perception) may be treated as social indicators. Both may be taken as crime-related indicators of the general quality of urban existence. Although such measures may serve as indicators, they are nonetheless themselves the objects of direct policy intervention.

It is of course the nature and amount of criminality--rather than, for instance, the fear of crime--which has attracted the greatest amount of attention in this regard. In recent years, policy planners and criminologists have attempted to decrease the volume of criminality through a number of techniques which have demonstrated originality of purpose and, which have met with varying degrees of success (Coffrey, 1975; Clifford, 1976; Newman, 1972; Amos and Wellford, 1967; Wahsnis, 1976).

Even more recently, increasing attention has come to be devoted to the fear of crime (as distinct from crime itself) as a community condition requiring ameliorative efforts. Henig and Maxfield, for instance, write:

> (s)ocial scientists and urban decision-makers must begin to recognize that fear, as distict from the actual threat of victimization, can be manipulated by an appropriate policy (1978: 310).

Consistent with this logic, a number of fear of crime prevention projects have been initiated (Chicago Department of Planning, City and Community Development, 1978; Gordon and Riger, 1978, Zion, 1978).

Admittedly, it may be premature to attempt to assess the overall effectiveness of programs designed to lessen public fear of crime. Still, it is necessary to indicate the extent to which strategies designed to reduce crime, and strategies intended to reduce the fear of crime may be inextricably linked such that each program produces outcomes which defeat the purpose of the other. Thus, at the level of policy formation and policy implementation, it is necessary to understand how programs of crime prevention and fear of crime prevention affect, and are affected by each other. While answers to such questions are, at this stage, hypothetical, they suggest disturbing and complex possibilities.

Such possibilities can be exemplified by briefly discussing some possible consequences which could flow from each type of program and, which could prove to be dysfunctional vis a vis the alternative program. To begin with, programs of crime prevention--particularly those programs which are aimed at community membership in general--

must rely upon some form of public relations effort in order to involve the citizenry. Yet, in view of present considerations, it is necessary to ask how such publicity might affect public perceptions of crime. It is quite possible that such publicity could be interpreted by members of the public as a threat message. After all the explicit or implicit theme of such messages would be that crime is going up and that action must be taken

It is equally possible that as the agencies of government and law enforcement convey this authorative message, they run the risk of increasing levels of fear among members of the public. In this regard, Garafolo and Laub note:

> Policies aimed directly at reducing crime may even prove counterproductive for easing the anxieties that we have categorized as the concern for community. It is not unrealistic to imagine that anti-crime programs-introduced with much publicity and fanfare-may actually heighten the suspicions that we have included within the concern for community. Furthermore, the programs themselves may have repressive anxiety-producing components such as increased surveillance of citizens in general and less selective "stop and frisk" policies by the police (1978: 252).

If increases in levels of fear do in fact produce dysfunctional consequences, as discussed in earlier chapters, then a subtle cycle could be set in motion, which in the final analysis is counterproductive to the original intentions of the crime prevention program.

While the effects of increased fear are not yet fully understood, two hypothetical reactions are of particular interest in the present context. First, the increase in fear through its effects on evasive behaviour, interpersonal trust and community affect could result in a general weakening of social control mechanisms at the community level. The general outcome of this weakening of social control could be an increase in the actual volume of criminality.

In somewhat different fashion, it may be argued that the effects of crime prevention campaign publicity could result in a community which is more vigilant, with respect to crime in the social environment. An increased vigilance may be an intuitively more appealing consequence than a weakening of social control. However, the long term effects of this increased vigilance could be equally defeating in terms of the overall goals of a crime prevention effort. In this regard, Wilkins suggests that:

> If the publics are continuously told that crime is going up, it is likely that they will become anxious in terms of what they perceive as crime (1951: 142).

As vigilance increases, so might the reportability of criminal offences. Crimes which previously may have gone unreported (or which may not even have been perceived as crimes) may come to official attention as a result of the public's perception that the problem of crime is increasing. As a result, the crime rate would appear to increase rather than decrease. Quite possibly, the cycle could then repeat itself; or, the consequence of increased vigilance could give way to the more dysfunctional consequences relating to a weakening of social control.

In similar terms, it is necessary to ask how programs designed to lower levels of public fear may have unanticipated consequences relating to issues of crime prevention. In this regard, Henig and Maxfield suggest:

> Not only are fear of crime reduction programs expensive, they are potentially dangerous. Some approaches aimed at fear reduction may actually increase fear among certain people, while other strategies may increase the incidence of crime itself. This can occur in two ways: (1) the policies which are designed to attract people to downtown areas may also attract criminals, and, (2) the increased feelings of security which follow from successful fear reduction campaigns attract more potential victims' and may result in carelessness (1978: 310).

Thus, programs designed to affect levels of public fear, like programs designed to affect levels of crime, may have consequences which work at cross purposes with alternative efforts to deal with the many sided and amorphous crime problem.

Clearly, the questions relating to public perceptions of crime as a substantive policy issue are complex. And, as previous chapters have indicated, we are only beginning to acquire the understanding necessary to allow us to ask (and to hopefully therefore answer) these questions. Despite the complex nature of the issues raised in this regard, three problem areas are evident. The first concerns the extent to which attempts to deal with an aspect or phase of the crime problem, in isolation, may be severely limited or even counter-productive in terms of overall ameliorative efforts. Second, from a social indicators perspective, this discussion makes clear the degree to which various crime-related signs of community well-being may be inextricably linked. Finally, these comments reaffirm the pragmatic importance of understanding the content and consequences of public perceptions of crime, as well the manner in which these perceptions relate to the objective facts of criminality.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate the degree to which public perceptions of crime may be related to pragmatic issues of policy formulation and implementation. To this end, an effort has been made to suggest the viability of such perceptual measures as social indicators of quality of life.

The brief analysis of the fear of a crime as a substantive policy issue has raised a number of important questions which suggest that any attempt to employ perceptions of crime as social indicators must be informed by two important considerations. First, objective and subjective measures of crime are not unrelated. Second, efforts designed to manipulate one type of measure (for substantive policy reasons) may have unanticipated effects on the other type of measure.

There are obviously a number of other questions relating to a social indicators approach to public perceptions of crime which have not been raised. Foremost among these questions are those of a conceptual nature. It is evident that there exists a measurement problem with respect to perceptual indicators, and that these problems would have to be effectively dealt with if such measures are to be employed as social indicators. Additionally, it is necessary that we come to better understand the types of effects which differential perceptions of crime produce, and, the conditions which make such effects likely.

CHAPTER 14

THE THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL NATURE OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The scope of the preceding chapters has been broad. An effort has been made to ask (and where possible, to answer) a number of questions relating to the conceptual, theoretical, empirical and pragmatic meaning of public perceptions of crime.

Because of the diverse nature of the questions raised, the present chapter will provide a summary and general discussion of the most salient aspects of the material introduced in earlier chapters. The discussion will suggest interpretive frameworks within which the findings of the present research effort might be understood. In addition, the attempt will be made to indicate what might be the most profitable line of inquiry for future research concerned with the analysis of public perceptions of crime.

Conceptual Issues in the Study of Public Perceptions of Crime

A central problem relating to the study of public perceptions of crime involves the validity of perceptual indicators. It is obvious that a number of the inconsistencies in the present research, as well as inconsistencies revealed in past research, are the product of differential measurement techniques. It appears that conclusions regarding both the factors which determine perceptions of crime and the consequences which flow from such perception are, to a large extent, dependent upon the nature of the perceptual indicators employed.

The present research attempted to clarify this issue by identifying a number of distinct perceptual dimensions. Admittedly, however, this classification scheme did not prove to be particularly useful. The dimensions of cognitive perception, fear of and concern with crime exhibited little internal consistency with respect to either independent or dependent variable relationships. However, this classification system did underscore the extent to which research findings in the area of public perception may be the byproducts of the differential utilization of perceptual indicators. This is not to suggest that there is no value to be derived from attempting to classify perceptions of crime in terms of more basic underlying dimensions. It may be however, that our understanding of the content of such perception is as yet so basic as to make immature the attempt to develop an heuristically useful classification system.

In a number of previous chapters, it was argued that perception of crime is a diffuse and many-sided concept. The referents of such perception do not seem to be narrowly restricted to the objective realities of crime and criminals. Thus, a number of writers have suggested the extent to which perceptions of crime may in fact be specific manifestations of a more general urban malaise (Skogan, 1976; Garafolo and Laub, 1978).

The position advocated here is supportive of this interpretation of the conceptual meaning of public perceptions of crime.

The present research effort, as well as previous work (Furstenberg, 1971; Lotz, 1979) has noted the relationships existing between perceptions of crime and other attitudinal indicators. Chapter 9 for instance, revealed a number of interesting and significant relationships involving perceptions of crime and resentment of changing social conditions. Similarly, Chapters 4 and 10 presented arguments indicating that perceptions of crime are no doubt influenced by a number of structural and dynamic characteristics of the larger community setting.

The conceptualization of perceptions of crime as indicators of a general community malaise should inform future research efforts in this area. It suggests the necessity of locating perception of crime within the larger perceptual matrix of which it is but one component.

Perceptions of Crime as Dependent Variables

The conceptual problems outlined above require that theoretical questions regarding public perceptions of crime must be asked and answered with due caution. Further, the inconsistent relationships involving perceptual indicators, prevents the assertion of definitive statements in this regard.

In general terms, however, the explanatory scheme presented in earlier chapters suggest that perceptions of crime may be influenced by two major sets of variables. The first set relates to the role conditions associated with the status characteristics of social actors. The second set of determining variables is related to the nature of the social environments within which these actors reside. Each set will be considered in turn.

1. Social Actors Characteristics. With respect to the characteristics of social actors, a distinction was made between primary and secondary status dimensions. The former designation refers to basic socio-demographic characteristics which may be thought to exert considerable influence upon the content of social roles. The latter designation, on the other hand, references those behaviour patterns which may be thought of as being influenced by the primary characteristics.

With respect to primary status characteristics, previous research suggested that three social aggregates--females, the elderly and lower socioeconomic status occupants--are of particular importance. While it is difficult to provide a conclusive summary, in this regard, the data analysis presented in Chapter 9, does suggest some tentative findings. Generally, it appears that sex is the most important predictor of perception while socioeconomic status appears to be of less importance. The data analysis suggests that the age variable is relatively unimportant and in fact, in some instances, this variable is related to perceptual indicators in the direction opposite that which was predicted. The findings regarding the relative importance of these variables as predictors of crime, is consistent with earlier research (Baumer, 1978).

In general, those relationships which did exist between primary status characteristics and perceptions of crime are not explained away on the basis of secondary status characteristic intervening variables. In addition, the lack of variability in the zero-order relationships across cities, suggests no support for the argument that the perceptions of crime associated with primary group membership are the product of a differential vulnerability to "objectively threatening" conditions.

The question thus remains as to how the relationships involving primary status characteristics and perceptions of crime are to be theoretically interpreted. It was suggested earlier, that a minority groups perspective might prove to be of some value in this regard. Of course, the data do not suggest such an interpretation with respect to age; but with respect to the variables sex and socioeconomic status, questions regarding the relationships between perceptions of crime and more generalized feelings of powerlessness may be quite valid.

The systematic empirical assessment of such questions would seem to suggest two general research strategies. The first approach might involve the attempt to understand the nature of the conceptual relationships involving measures of perceptions of crime and measures of the more general phenomena of powerlessness and alienation. As discussed above, there have been very few attempts to locate perceptions of crime within a more general perceptual matrix. A second approach to the investigation of a possible relationship between perceptions of crime and minority status might involve the intensive and systematic investigation of special populations such as women or the elderly. Although some such research has been initiated, with respect to more general issues, (Riger, Gordon and LeBaily, 1978; Jaycox, 1978) the theoretical concerns noted here remain largely ignored.

The empirical examination of the relationships involving secondary status characteristics and perceptions of crime revealed little of substantive interest. In predictive terms, the most important variables proved to be the measures of resentment of changing social conditions. The implication of such relationships were discussed above.

Arguments presented in Chapter 3 suggested that there is little reason to expect that the remaining secondary status characteristics--victimization, media behaviour and length of residency--would be strongly related to perceptual indicators. It was, however, hypothesized that secondary status characteristics would influence perceptions of crime only within particular urban environments. The hypothesis was thus one of conditional influence, suggesting that the relationships involving secondary status characteristics and perceptions of crime are dependent upon the larger social context.

The data analysis presented in Chapter 10 provides very little support for this hypothesis. Despite the disappointing results, however, it may be premature to suggest the outright rejection of the hypothesis of conditional influence. It may be that the criminal environments of the cities examined in the present research did not exhibit variation significant enough to allow for such conditional influence.

The argument that such secondary status characteristics interact with community setting to produce differential effects could be more properly assessed if both the characteristics and the community settings were selected with these specific research purposes in mind. With respect to media behaviour, for instance, it would be possible to determine through content analysis, the extent to which media differ across communities regarding the agenda priority assigned to crime. Assuming that such differences could be determined in a fashion that is both valid and reliable, it would then be possible to systematically assess the degree to which similar levels of media exposure, in different communities, might produce differentials in perception.

Each of the secondary status characteristics discussed in preceding chapters is of vital substantive interest and should be more methodically analyzed with respect to the hypothesis of conditional influence.

2. Community Characteristics. A theme which has been given a great deal of attention in the present research concerns the manner in which social environments exert independent influence upon perceptions of crime. However, our understanding of the nature of this influence and its theoretical meaning is rudimentary.

It was noted that early research of this type tended to conceptualize community effects in what might be referred to as undimensional terms. There existed the rather simplistic tendency to conceptualize the effects of the social environment as the effects of, for instance, community size (Clemente & Kleinman, 1977) or level of crime (Block and Long, 1973).

An important theoretical advancement was provided by Conklin (1975) who conceptualized the effects of community upon perceptions of crime in terms of what he called "the criminal environment". The value of this concept should not be underestimated. In addition to indicating the complexity of community influence, the criminal environment concept vividly portrays the sociological nature of the processes under consideration.

While the present research acknowledged the heuristic utility of this concept, it attempted to make explicit and, to empirically address some of its shortcomings. A most important issue in this regard concerns the content of the criminal environment and the manner in which this content is affected by the dynamic and structural bases of the wider community. In other words, if the criminal environment is defined as the myths, legends, ideas and views which exist with respect to crime in a given social setting, it is necessary to ask for a specification of the factors which determine the content of those myths, legends, ideas and views.

From the position that perceptions of crime are diffuse phenomena, which must be broadly interpreted, it was argued that several organizational and dynamic aspects of community might be important in this regard. Chapter 3 presented material suggesting that crime levels, the stability of crime levels, population size, population increase, population heterogeneity and signs of incivility could all be theoretically interpreted as factors likely to affect the content of the criminal environment.

A contextual analysis was undertaken in order to at least partially assess the empirical validity of these theoretical assertions. The findings suggest that the three variables employed in the analysis--crime level, population size and population increase--are independently related to measures of perception. In the case of population increase, however, the relationship was not in the predicted direction.

It is felt that the employment of contextual analyses as a means to understanding the influence of criminal environments upon perceptions of crime, is to be encouraged. However such analyses would profit from a number of methodological and theoretical refinements. First, it is necessary to specify the unit of analysis with a greater degree of precision. While the present study operationalized community in terms of city, it is acknowledged that this may not be the most appropriate strategy. It may be, as discussed in Chapter 10, that neighbourhood and natural area are more suitable environments within which to locate the criminal environment. The lack of specificity attributed to the concept of community may mean that such questions are as salient to the urban sociologist, as they are to the criminologist.

A second refinement which could increase the value of contextual analyses relates to the proper operationalization of the contextual variables discussed in Chapter 4. In this regard, it is necessary to operationally define such variables in a way that allows for sufficient variability in view of existing data limitations. In addition, it should be noted that no claim is made regarding the exhaustive nature of the contextual variables discussed in Chapter 4. It is readily admitted that subsequent theory and research could indicate the importance of other contextual characteristics in influencing perceptions of crime.

A final problem area concerns the theoretical meaning of the criminal environment. As it is employed by Conklin, the terms denotes a phenomenon which is in a sense both cultural and subcultural. Clearly, the criminal environment of any community is part of the larger criminal environment of the total society. While heuristically useful, the concept of a criminal environment is vague and imprecise.

With respect to the concepts of culture and subculture, Downes has written:

> What constitutes the "culture" of a complex society: all its subcultures, their uniformities only, or the dominant subculture? Where to put it crudely, does culture end and subculture begin? Does subculture merely refract or totally displace culture? Any, vagueness over the boundaries of the overall culture will automatically extend to subcultures (1976: 133).

Replacing the terms culture and subculture with the term criminal environment in the above quotation raises a number of important theoretical issues which must be addressed if the relationship between community context and perceptions of crime is to be understood.

Additionally, it is necessary to understand that the myths, legends and views which exist with respect to crime in a given social setting are intricately related to the climate of opinion (Sills, 1961) regarding other matters of community concern. The community-specific information set relating to crime and criminals does not exist in isolation but is part of a more general malaise. The concept of a "criminal environment" should incorporate such considerations.

Perceptions of Crime as Independent Variables

In addition to a consideration of the factors which condition perceptions of crime, the present research attempted to analyze the nature of the effects or consequences which flow from such perception. Previous research had suggested three major types of consequences which could be considered salient from both a theoretical and policy perspective. Thus, it was hypothesized, that perceptions of crime would be related to measures of interpersonal trust, defensive behaviour and community affect. In addition, it was suggested that the relationships involving these variables would be affected by the nature of the wider community environment. This second hypothesis is predicated upon the assumption that there is a threshold effect operating such that perceptions of crime will be more likely to produce dysfunctional consequences in particular types of community settings.

Overall, the effects of differential perceptions of crime upon interpersonal trust, community affect and defensive behaviour appear to be small. In part, these small effects must be understood as a result of the fact that variation exhibited by a number of the indicators was not particularly great. In addition, the hypothesis of a threshold effect with respect to perceptions of crime was generally unsupported. It is of course possible, as Conklin might suggest, that the communities studied did not exhibit sufficient variation with respect to their criminal environments to clearly produce such effects.

In general, however, the small but significant relationships involving perceptions of crime and interpersonal trust, community affect and defensive behaviour, raise a number of important issues. Most importantly, the theoretical meaning of these effects remains unclear. As discussed extensively in earlier chapters, issues relating to the effects of perceptions of crime are most easily assessed within a functionalist framework. The argument has been made that nonconformity has consequences both "for" and "against" organization (Cohen, 1966) and that perception may be conceptualized as the variable which intervenes between nonconformity and its effects. Thus, the analysis of the effects of perception of crime is a means of studying the effects of crime *per se*.

While this theoretical framework is a convenient mechanism for understanding the narrow questions relating to the effects of perceptions of crime, it poses serious problems. For instance, the material discussed in Chapter 13 and elsewhere suggests the extent to which perceptions of crime may be more general indicators of a concern for community. If this is in fact the case, then the functionalist framework may be suggesting a theoretical tautology. In other words, if perceptions of crime are indicators of general community concern, then the fact that they are related to indicators of a weakened community is self-evident.

In methodological terms, it may even be that the questions relating to the effects of perceptions of crime cannot be suitably addressed through correlational techniques. The correlations involving perceptions of crime, interpersonal trust, community affect and defensive behaviour may be demonstrating that perceptions of crime (as general indicators of concern with community) are part of a larger whole and not that such perceptions produce consequences. To ask questions about the effects of perception of crime is to ask questions about a social process. Quite possibly, future research could profit from attempts to address this process more directly. There is a need, for instance, for natural history approaches which would qualitatively detail the manner in which perceptions of crime change over time as well as the changes in behaviour which changes in perception bring about (Poveda, 1972). Such observational techniques may provide the basic data necessary to an understanding of the nature of public perception and its perceptual correlates. It may be only then that more sophisticated hypotheses may be offered and more convenient analytical techniques may be used to test them.

The Wider Implications of the Study of Public Perceptions of Crime

While the present research was largely concerned with attempts to ask and answer a relatively narrow range of questions, a number of somewhat more diverse issues were raised in Chapters 12 and 13. Specifically, these issues concerned the implications which the study of public perceptions of crime have for the more general body of criminological theory and for the pragmatic questions of public policy.

With respect to criminological theory, the argument was made that it is erroneous to conceptualize the study of public perception as a narrowly defined subarea of criminology. Rather, it was suggested that the attempt should be made to understand the relationships which such perceptions have to a whole range of key criminological questions.

Specifically, the arguments presented in Chapter 12 attempted to demonstrate how public perceptions of crime may be viewed as a theme which relates to the study of norm creation, crime causation and the effects of crime. The failure to explore such connections perpetuates an oversight which has been characteristic of theory in the sociology of crime and deviance. In particular terms, this oversight relates to the failure to account for the role of the acting public. Generally, criminologists are not concerned with members of the public until they become actively and visibly involved in some phase of the criminal justice system. The tendency then is to concentrate upon the special statuses of, for instance, victim, juror or defendant. In the absence of such direct contact, the role of public-at-large is assumed or ignored; and as a result, a host of theoretical questions remain unaddressed.

It should be re-emphasized that the acting public is a valid sociological conceptualization which may bring fresh interpretative insight to a number of key criminological issues. The perceptions of crime which members of the public hold and which form the basis of social action, provide a theoretical and empirical focal point for the analysis of the behaviour of the public.

The wider policy implication of the study of public perceptions of crime were discussed in Chapter 13. In general, the argument was put forth that the pragmatic role of perceptions of crime may be understood with reference to the framework known as social indicators research. Thus, if perceptions of crime can be conceptualized as general measures of concern for community, they may serve as indicators of the perceived quality of life.

However, it was noted that the employment of measures of perceptions of crime as social indicators, raises a number of important policy issues. Most directly, these issues concern the fact that subjective crime-related social indicators, like objective crime-related social indicators are themselves the object of deliberate attempts at manipulation. Attempts to control public fear of crime, like attempts to control the rate of crime will no doubt have unanticipated consequences. It is the interrelationships of these indicators and the unanticipated effects of the manipulation of each for the other that is the crucial element in this regard. There is clearly a need for a empirically supported conceptual scheme which demonstrates the interrelationships between objective and subjective crime-related quality of life indicators. In view of our rudimentary understanding of the nature of the relationship of perceptions of crime to the objective realities of crime, however, the development of such a scheme does not appear to be an immediate possibility. Nonetheless, the mere suggestion of the interrelationships discussed in Chapter 13 indicates that crime-prevention programs should be informed by an awareness of the possible short-range and long-range consequences which such programs could have for perceptions of crime. Carefully desgined strategies of program evaluation must of necessity be incorporated into efforts at both crime prevention and fear of crime prevention. Only through the careful employment of such evaluative techniques, can the unintended consequences of program evaluation be both scrutinized and controlled.

In Conclusion

When the present research project was initially formulated, the intention was to restrict attention to a relatively small number of specific theoretical and research questions. While those questions remained, a host of additional questions emerged and as a result the attempt was made to include a consideration of as many of these issues as possible. This broadening of interest was no doubt in large part a consequence of the information explosion which occurred during the preparation of this manuscript.

It is difficult to briefly summarize the findings of the research reported here. Most generally, however, it has been learned that both the causes and the consequences of perceptions of crime involve complex social processes. Such perceptions, it has been shown, emerge out of an interplay between social actor and community characteristics. With respect to social actor characteristics, the data indicated that the variables sex and resentment of social change are of particular predictive importance. Further, a contextual analysis suggested that both the crime rate and the population size of cities affect the crime-related perceptions of residents.

The analysis relating to the consequences which flow from differential perceptions of crime focused upon the affects which such perceptions have for community affect, interpersonal trust and defensive behaviour. The influence of perception upon these variables was small but in many cases significant.

It may be that the preceding pages have raised more questions than they have answered. While this may be true, it is also true that we are only beginning to understand the extent to which the study of public perceptions of crime is an area of extreme complexity. The appropriate questions are not easily asked and the theoretical and practical implications of the answers to these questions are only crudely understood. While it may be presumptious to assume that the preceding pages have clarified many of these issues, it is at least hoped that they have helped to map out the complexity.

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APPENDIX A

Sampling in Alberta Cities for Mass Media Crime Prevention Evaluation

City	Desired	Obtained	Type
Edmonton	500	390	Stratified Random
Calgary	350	327	RDD
Fort McMurray	177	177	RDD
Grande Prairie	143	101	RDD
Lethbridge	209	102	Stratified Random
Medicine Hat	103	103	RDD
Red Deer	102	88	RDD

APPENDIX B

CRIME PREVENTION - SOLICITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY JANUARY, 1979

1. City ______________________________

2. Telephone number to be called _______________

3. Interviewers name (print) ______________________________

4. Interview I.D. Number ______________________________

5. Census tract _________________

6. Electoral District ____________ Enumeration Area ________

7.	Call 1	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 2	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 3	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 4	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 5	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 6	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 7	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 8	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 9	Date	____________	Time	____________
	Call 10	Date	____________	Time	____________

8. Non completion (reason) ______________________________

____

9. Length of interview ______________________________

CRIME PREVENTION - SOLICITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1978

Hello, I am ______________________________ and I am helping to conduct a crime prevention study for The University of Alberta. All your answers are strictly confidential and will be used only for statistical purposes. Your responses are very important as they should help to prevent crime in your community. Thank you for taking the time to do this.

I. First, I would like to ask you some questions about crime prevention. The results of answers to these questions may well lead to improved safety for all of us.

1. A. Which of the following problems (if any) have you been paying most attention to lately?

    1. ( ) Inflation
    2. ( ) Unemployment
    3. ( ) Crime
    4. ( ) Taxes
    5. ( ) National unity
    6. ( ) Family matters
    7. ( ) None of these ⎤
    8. ( ) NA ⎦ (SKIP TO QUESTION 2)

   B. Of those problems, is there another one you have been paying attention to lately?

    1. ( ) Inflation
    2. ( ) Unemployment
    3. ( ) Crime
    4. ( ) Taxes
    5. ( ) National Unity
    6. ( ) Family matters
    7. ( ) None of these
    8. ( ) NA

2. Would you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Many of our modern social problems result from the fact that we have gotten too far away from old moral standards.

1. ( ) Agree
2. ( ) Disagree
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

3. What do YOU think is the most important thing that can be done to reduce crime?

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THESE

1. ( ) Don't know
2. ( ) No answer
3. ( ) Control firearms and restrict availability of guns
4. ( ) Greater defensive behavior on part of citizens (precautions which citizens could take to protect home)
5. ( ) Increase social control (relates to the role of school, family etc.)
6. ( ) Changes in criminal justice system (longer jail sentences, tougher laws, more police etc.)
7. ( ) Greater citizen involvement in crime prevention (helping police, reporting crimes, helping neighbors etc.)
8. ( ) Increase availability of crime prevention knowledge (educate public etc.)
9. ( ) Other

---

4. I am going to read you a list of crime prevention slogans. Can you tell me if you have hear or seen any of them used recently?

	Never Heard of it	Heard of it	Not Sure	No Answer
1. Pull together to prevent crime	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
2. Shoplifting is no way to make your mark in life	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
3. Crime prevention is a community affair	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
4. Let's not give crime a chance	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
5. Help cure the common crime	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4

5. A. I am going to read you a list of other types of campaign that may or may not be going on in your city. Can you tell me if you have heard of any of them or seen them being used?

	Never Heard of it	Heard of it	Not Sure	No Answer
1. Buckle-up for safety	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
2. Drive decent	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
3. Fire Watch	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
4. Have you hugged your kid today	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4

B. Do you think the way people drive in (name city) is a problem?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) NA

C. Have you changed your driving habits in the last few months?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know]–(SKIP TO QUES. 6)
4. ( ) Not sure
5. ( ) Don't Drive

D. How? ______________________________

____

E. Why did you change your habits?

1. ( ) Something they saw or heard in a safe driving campaign
2. ( ) Other (specify ______________________)
3. ( ) NA

6. Businessmen tell us that shoplifting costs consumers millions of dollars every year. How much do you think shoplifting adds to each dollar you spend?

______________ Code amount as ¢ (cents)

______________ (NA)

______________ Don't Know

7. I am going to read some hypothetical crime situations. In each case please tell me if you would do anything, if you saw this event happening.

A. Someone is breaking into a neighbors house or apartment.

1. ( ) Do nothing
2. ( ) Call police
3. ( ) Call relative/friend
4. ( ) Call neighbor
5. ( ) Other (specify ______________________)
6. ( ) Not sure
7. ( ) Intervene self

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THIS.

B. Someone is damaging your neighbors property (for example: soaping windows, or writing with spray paint on walls).

1. ( ) Do nothing
2. ( ) Call police
3. ( ) Call relative/friend
4. ( ) Call neighbor
5. ( ) Other (specify ______________________)
6. ( ) Not sure
7. ( ) Intervene self

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THIS.

C. You see someone shoplifting in a department store.

1. ( ) Do nothing
2. ( ) Call police
3. ( ) Tell store personnel
4. ( ) Other (specify ______________________)
5. ( ) Not sure
6. ( ) Intervene self

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THIS.

D. You see someone trying to break into a car on your street.

1. ( ) Do nothing
2. ( ) Call police
3. ( ) Call relative/friend
4. ( ) Other (specify ______________________)
5. ( ) Not sure
6. ( ) Intervene self

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THIS.

E. Someone is damaging a school (for instance: breaking windows or spray painting walls).

1. ( ) Do nothing
2. ( ) Call police
3. ( ) Call relative/friend
4. ( ) Other (specify ______________________)
5. ( ) Not sure
6. ( ) Intervene self
7. ( ) Tell school personnel

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THIS.

8. A. By the way, what type of dwelling are you presently living in?

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST IF RESPONDENT IS NOT SURE

1. ( ) House
2. ( ) Hi-rise apartment
3. ( ) Other apartment or flat
4. ( ) Townhouse
5. ( ) Other (Specify) ____________________
6. ( ) Condominium
7. ( ) Mobile home
8. ( ) Institution
9. ( ) No answer

B. Do you rent or own this home?

1. ( ) Rent
2. ( ) Own
3. ( ) No answer

---

9. Could you tell me how long you have lived at this present address?

__________ INTERVIEWER: code number of years
00 - less than a year

INTERVIEWER: THIS QUESTION REFERS TO NEW BEHAVIORS IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS TO PROTECT AGAINST CRIME.

10. A. Within the last six months have you done anything to protect yourself or your property against crime?

1. ( ) No (SKIP TO QUES. 11 IF RENTER, QUES. 12 IF NON-RENTER)

2. ( ) Yes

B. What did you do? (Mark all that apply)

1. ( ) Started to lock doors and/or windows
2. ( ) Installed new locks
3. ( ) Installed new lights; leave lights on
4. ( ) Bought a dog
5. ( ) Carry/bought a weapon for protection
6. ( ) Bought insurance
7. ( ) Put valuables in secure place
8. ( ) Started to secure car (e.g., lock car, keep in garage)
9. ( ) Changed activity pattern (e.g., go out less, don't go out alone, etc.)
10. ( ) Bars on windows
11. ( ) Installed peephole
12. ( ) Other ______________________________
13. ( ) No answer

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THIS.

C. What led you to take this action?

1. ( ) No answer or not applicable
2. ( ) Don't know
3. ( ) Concern with crime (heard about crime in neighborhood, city etc.
4. ( ) Respondent, household or members of household were victimized
5. ( ) Respondent knows other people who took similar action
6. ( ) Respondent saw ad or publicity of some sort that suggested that this type of action be taken
7. ( ) Other (specify ____________________)

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THIS.

---

11. INTERVIEWER: ASK ONLY IF SUBJECT IS RENTER

Has the landlord or management of your building done anything to make this building secure from thieves and vandals?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

12. In the last six months have you attended crime prevention sessions offered by local police?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer
5. ( ) Other (specify) ______________________________

---

13. A. Are you aware of a crime that was committed against you or your property in the last six months?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Not sure (SKIP TO QUES. 14)
4. ( ) No answer
5. ( ) Other (specify) _________________________

B. What was the crime? ______________________________

C. Was the crime reported to the police?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

14. When you (or other family members) are at home do you keep your doors locked?

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST

1. ( ) Always
2. ( ) Most of the time
3. ( ) Sometimes
4. ( ) Hardly ever
5. ( ) Never
6. ( ) No answer
7. ( ) Sometimes during the day but always at night

15. When you leave your home (even for a short time) do you keep the doors locked?

1. ( ) Always
2. ( ) Most of the time
3. ( ) Sometimes
4. ( ) Hardly ever
5. ( ) Never
6. ( ) No answer
7. ( ) Other

INTERVIEWER: READ LIST

---

16. I am going to read you a list of things that people have done to secure their homes. Have you ever done any of these things?

1. ( ) Lock doors
2. ( ) Lock windows
3. ( ) Tell a neighbor you will be away
4. ( ) Turn on alarm system
5. ( ) Leave outside lights on
6. ( ) Leave inside lights on
7. ( ) Have automatic timers for lights
8. ( ) Leave drapes and shades open
9. ( ) Have special locks (i.e. deadbolt)
10. ( ) Have through frame pins and rods on sliding doors
11. ( ) Have a guard dog
12. ( ) Operation identification
13. ( ) Tell police
14. ( ) Lock garage
15. ( ) Stop deliveries
16. ( ) Mow grass in summer/shovel snow in winter
17. ( ) Other (specify) ____________________
18. ( ) No answer
19. ( ) Install or use a peephole
20. ( ) Buy or carry a weapon
21. ( ) Put bars on windows
22. ( ) Did you ask a neighbor to park a car in your driveway, while you were away on vacation

INTERVIEWER: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY. YOU SHOULD INCLUDE APPROPRIATE ITEMS FROM QUES. 10B

---

17. Do you drive on a regular basis?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) NA

(SKIP TO QUES. 18C)

18. A. Would you pick up hitchhikers if you were driving alone in a car or truck?

1. ( ) Yes INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ.
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Not sure
4. ( ) No answer
5. ( ) Under some circumstances (i.e. students or bad weather)

B. Have you picked up hitchhikers in the past six months?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) No answer

C. Have you hitchhiked in the past six months?

1. ( ) Yes INTERVIEWER: IF NON-DRIVER SKIP TO QUES. 21.
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Not sure
4. ( ) No answer

---

19. A. Do you lock your car when you go shopping?

1. ( ) Always
2. ( ) Most of the time]- READ THIS
3. ( ) Sometimes
4. ( ) Hardly ever
5. ( ) Never
6. ( ) NA]- (SKIP TO QUES. 20A)

B. Have you always done this or have you changed your behavior in recent times?

1. ( ) Always done this (SKIP TO QUES. 20A)
2. ( ) Changed behavior recently (INTERVIEWER: last 6 months)
3. ( ) NA

C. Why did you change your behavior?

1. ( ) Something they saw or heard in an anti-crime ad campaign
2. ( ) Personal victimization
3. ( ) Other (specify ______________________________)
4. ( ) NA

---

20. A. When it is really cold out do you ever leave your car running while you do an errand?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No (SKIP TO QUES. 21)
3. ( ) NA

B. Are the doors left locked or unlocked?

1. ( ) Locked
2. ( ) Unlocked (SKIP TO QUES. 21)
3. ( ) NA

C. Have you always done this or have you changed your behavior in recent times?

1. ( ) Always
2. ( ) Changed behavior recently (INTERVIEWER: last 6 months)
3. ( ) NA

D. Why did you change your behavior?

1. ( ) Something they saw or heard in an anti-crime ad
2. ( ) Personal victimization
3. ( ) Other (specify ______________________)
4. ( ) NA

---

21. A. Do you know the police emergency number or do you have easy access to it?

1. ( ) Yes (know it)
2. ( ) Yes (easy access)
3. ( ) Don't know it
4. ( ) No answer

(3–4: SKIP TO QUES. 22)

B. Can you tell it to me now?

1. ( ) No
2. ( ) Correct number for area
3. ( ) Other response

Correct Responses	
911 or Grande Prairie	532-7785
Ft. McMurray	743-2286
Red Deer	347-4431
Medicine Hat	527-2251
Lethbridge	328-4444

22. Do you have a dog that might protect you or your household?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) No answer

---

23. Do you have an insurance policy that would cover theft and/or vandalism to your home?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

24. Do you have a smoke or fire detector in your home?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

25. A. Do you have a burglar alarm in your home?

    1. ( ) Yes
    2. ( ) No (SKIP TO QUES. 26)
    3. ( ) Don't know
    4. ( ) No answer

    B. What prompted you to install it?

    1. ( ) Came with house
    2. ( ) Concerned with or afraid of crime generally
    3. ( ) Some sort of media message
    4. ( ) Victim of crime (respondent, household, household member)
    5. ( ) Other
    6. ( ) No answer

---

26. I am going to mention the names of some community programs. Please tell me if you have heard of them and what they do.

A. Block Parent

1. ( ) Never heard of it
2. ( ) Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ( ) Correct description
4. ( ) Incorrect description

B. Lady Beware

INTERVIEWER: DESCRIPTION IN MANUAL

1. ( ) Never heard of it
2. ( ) Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ( ) Correct description
4. ( ) Incorrect description

C. Tele-Alert

1. ( ) Never heard of it.
2. ( ) Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ( ) Incorrect description

D. Operation Identification

1. ( ) Never heard of it
2. ( ) Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ( ) Correct description
4. ( ) Incorrect description

E. Neighborhood Watch

1. ( ) Never heard of it
2. ( ) Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ( ) Correct description
4. ( ) Incorrect description

F. Lock it or Lose it

1. ( ) Never heard of it
2. ( ) Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ( ) Correct description
4. ( ) Incorrect description

G. After Dark

1. ( ) Never heard of it
2. ( ) Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ( ) Incorrect description

26. H. Ski Check

1. ☐ Never heard of it
2. ☐ Heard of it but don't know what it is
3. ☐ Correct description
4. ☐ Incorrect description

27. A. Do you keep a gun or guns in your home?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No (SKIP TO QUES. 28)
3. ☐ No answer

B. Are any of them kept loaded?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Don't know
4. ☐ No answer

C. Are any of the guns you keep in the house handguns (or pistols)?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Refuse to answer
4. ☐ Don't know
5. ☐ No answer

D. Could you tell me why you keep guns in your home?

INTERVIEWER: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY. DO NOT READ THESE ITEMS.

1. ☐ Protection
2. ☐ Hunting
3. ☐ Collecting
4. ☐ Other
5. ☐ No answer

27.1 Do you have a neighborhood watch decal on your door or window?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Don't know
4. ☐ No answer

28. Do you have any close friends or relatives who in the past six months did any of the following:

1. Installed additional locks

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

2. Installed special lights to make their homes safer from crime

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

3. Bought a weapon

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

4. Installed a burglar alarm system

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

II. Now, I would like to ask you some questions about T.V. radio and newspapers.

29. How many times did you read a newspaper in the last week?

____________________ INTERVIEWER: PUT IN TIMES LAST WEEK

97 ( ) don't regularly read paper

98 ( ) don't know

99 ( ) no answer

30. In the last week about how much time per day did you spend watching TV?

_______________ INTERVIEWER: CODE NEAREST NUMBER OF HOURS.

97 ( ) Never watch TV
98 ( ) Don't know
99 ( ) No answer

---

31. In the last week about how much time per day did you spend listening to the radio?

_________ INTERVIEWER: CODE NEAREST NUMBER OF HOURS.

97 ( ) Don't regularly listen to the radio
98 ( ) Don't know
99 ( ) No answer

---

32. In the last week did you watch any TV news?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

33. Now I would like to get your opinion on how radio, television and the newspaper you read compare?

A.	Which presents the fairest most unbiased news?	1R	2T	3N	4DK	5NA
B.	Which is most important to you?	1R	2T	3N	4DK	5NA
C.	Which is the least important to you?	1R	2T	3N	4DK	5NA

34. A. Can you think of anything that you saw on TV or in the newspaper or anything you heard on radio recently that informed you about something you yourself could do to prevent crime?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No ⎤ (SKIP TO QUES. 35)
3. ( ) No answer ⎦

B. Can you tell me what it was?

INTERVIEWER: PROBE FOR CONTENT. (RECORD RESPONSE HERE)

C. Did you follow the advice after you heard or saw the message?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Not sure
4. ( ) No answer

---

35. Quite regularly, the provincial government and the local police use radio, television and newspapers to inform people about preventing crime. In your opinion, during the last six months have the number os such crime prevention messages increased, decreased or remained about the same?

1. ( ) Increased
2. ( ) Decreased
3. ( ) Remained the same
4. ( ) Other response
5. ( ) Don't know
6. ( ) No answer

III. Now I would like to ask you some questions about you, your neighborhood and crime and the police in general.

36. How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighborhood during the day? Would you say that you feel:

1. ( ) Very safe ⎤
2. ( ) Reasonably safe ⎥
3. ( ) Somewhat unsafe ⎥ READ
4. ( ) Very unsafe ⎦
5. ( ) Don't know
6. ( ) No answer

---

37. How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighborhood at night?

1. ( ) Very safe ⎤
2. ( ) Reasonably safe ⎥
3. ( ) Somewhat unsafe ⎥ READ
4. ( ) Very unsafe ⎦
5. ( ) Don't know
6. ( ) No answer

---

38. When a crime is committed in your neighborhood, is it committed by people who live in the area or by outsiders?

1. ( ) In area ⎤
2. ( ) Outsiders ⎥
3. ( ) Some of each ⎥ DO NOT READ
4. ( ) Don't know ⎥
5. ( ) No answer ⎦

---

39. A. Has anything ever happened to you personally that makes you fear for your personal safety, or the safety of your property in this neighborhood?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No ⎤ (SKIP TO QUES. 40)
3. ( ) No answer ⎦

39. B. What was it?

1. ( ) Respondent victim of violence (Assault, rape, other sex crimes)
2. ( ) Respondent victim of property crime (Break & Enter, theft)
3. ( ) Respondent victim of robbery (Face to Face Theft, Hold-ups, purse snatching)
4. ( ) Some other response
5. ( ) No answer
6. ( ) Refuse to answer

---

40. A. Have you ever heard anything or read anything that makes you fear for your personal safety or the safety of your property in this neighborhood?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No ⎫ (SKIP TO QUES. 41)
3. ( ) No answer ⎭

B. (If yes) Where did you receive this information from?

1. ( ) Told by some other person (i.e. family member, neighbor, relative)
2. ( ) Found out through some mass channel (i.e. radio, TV, newspaper)
3. ( ) Other (specify _______________)
4. ( ) No answer

C. What was it you found out?

1. ( ) Reports of interpersonal violence
2. ( ) Reports of vandalism or destruction of property
3. ( ) Reports of homes being broken into
4. ( ) Reports of people being robbed
5. ( ) Some combination of the above
6. ( ) Other
7. ( ) No answer

41. When you think about the chances of being a victim of a fairly serious crime, would you say that your neighborhood is very safe as compared to other neighborhoods in town, about average, less safe than most or one of the worst in town?

1. ( ) Very safe
2. ( ) About average
3. ( ) Less safe than most
4. ( ) One of the worst in town
5. ( ) Don't know
6. ( ) No answer

---

42. (While we're on the subject), when you think about the chances of being a victim of a fiarly serious crime, would you say that this city is very safe as compared to other cities, about average, less safe than most, or one of the worst in the province?

1. ( ) Very safe
2. ( ) About average
3. ( ) Less safe than most
4. ( ) One of the worst in the province
5. ( ) Don't know
6. ( ) No answer

---

43. How likely do you think it is that a person walking around in your neighborhood after dark will be held up or attacked? Do you think it is:

1. ( ) Very likely] INTERVIEWER: READ THIS
2. ( ) Not very likely]
3. ( ) Not sure or Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

44. Is there any place around your home - when I say around your home, I mean within a mile - where you are afraid to walk alone at night?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

45. Have there been times recently when you wanted to go somewhere in your neighborhood but stayed home instead because you thought it would be unsafe to go there?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

46. Do you think that most of the people in your neighborhood can be trusted?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

47. A. Do you think there is any particular group of people in your city that contributes to crime more than other groups?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

(2–4: SKIP TO QUES. 48)

B. (If yes) What is the group? INTERVIEWER: BE SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE.

____

____

---

48. On the whole, do you like living in (name city) or not?

1. ( ) I like it
2. ( ) Don't like it
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

49. Do you think that (name city) is a good place to bring up children?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

50. Would you someday like to move to another neighborhood?

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know
4. ( ) No answer

---

51. Would you describe the attitude of your neighbors toward strangers from outside the neighborhood as friendly or unfriendly?

1. ( ) Friendly
2. ( ) Unfriendly
3. ( ) NA

---

52. Some people have said that the population of (name city) is growing too quickly. Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with this statement?

1. ( ) Strongly agree
2. ( ) Agree
3. ( ) Disagree
4. ( ) Strongly disagree
5. ( ) Don't know
6. ( ) No answer

53. I am going to mention a few different crimes and I would like you to tell me if you are concerned or not concerned about the possibility of becoming a victim of these crimes at some time in the future.

	Concerned	Not Concerned	Don't Know	No Answer
A. Break and enter	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
B. Theft of your car	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
C. Theft FROM your car	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
D. Assault	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
E. Having your property vandalized	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4
F. Rape (ask only of females)	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4

---

54. Now, I would like you to tell me if you think your chances of being a victim of each of these same crimes has gone up, gone down or remained about the same in recent years.

	Gone Up	Gone Down	Same	Don't Know	No Answer
A. Break and Enter	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4	( ) 5
B. Vandalism	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4	( ) 5
C. Theft of your car	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4	( ) 5
D. Theft from your car	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4	( ) 5
E. Assault	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4	( ) 5
F. Rape (ask only of females)	( ) 1	( ) 2	( ) 3	( ) 4	( ) 5

---

55. What do you think is the most common sort of crime committed in your neighborhood?

INTERVIEWER: IF SUBJECT INSISTS ON MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE, CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

1. ( ) Burglary/Break-ins
2. ( ) Robberty/Hold-ups
3. ( ) Assault/Mugging
4. ( ) Stealing/Theft
5. ( ) Car Theft
6. ( ) Bicycle Theft
7. ( ) Shoplifting
8. ( ) Vandalism/Juvenile Delinquency/Teen Gangs/Disorderly
9. ( ) Traffic Violations
10. ( ) Kidnapping
11. ( ) Murder
12. ( ) Drug Abuse
13. ( ) Rape/Sex Crimes
14. ( ) Pickpocketing/Purse Snatching
15. ( ) Drinking
16. ( ) No answer
17. ( ) Drunk Driving
18. ( ) Other (specify ________________)

---

56. Are you in favour of changing the laws to give the police in your city more power, less power or would you like to see them have the same amount of power that they now have?

1. ( ) More power
2. ( ) Less power
3. ( ) Keep their power the same
4. ( ) Don't know
5. ( ) No answer

---

57. A. Have you or a member of your household ever been the victim of a serious crime? (If hesitant give examples such as robbery, assault, arson, etc.)

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No
3. ( ) Don't know — (SKIP TO QUES. 58)
4. ( ) No answer

B. Who was the victim?

1. ( ) Respondent
2. ( ) Family member
3. ( ) Other
4. ( ) No answer

C. What was the crime? INTERVIEWER: IF MORE THAN ONE CRIME AND VICTIM, TAKE MOST RECENT CRIMES UP TO THREE.

____

____

D. When did this occur?

1. ( ) Last six months
2. ( ) More than six months, but less than a year — DO NOT READ
3. ( ) More than a year ago
4. ( ) Not sure or don't know

---

58. I am going to read to you two statements and I would like you to tell me if you agree or disagree with the statements.

1. Nice as it is to have faith in your fellow man, it seldom pays off.

   1. ( ) Agree　　3. ( ) Don't know
   2. ( ) Disagree　　4. ( ) No answer

2. The world is full of people who will take advantage of you if you give them the slightest opportunity.

   1. ( ) Agree　　3. ( ) Don't know
   2. ( ) Disagree　　4. ( ) No answer

IV. Finally, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.

59. A. What kind of work do you normally do? INTERVIEWER: GET SPECIFICS

____

INTERVIEWER: IF THE ABOVE ANSWER IMPLIES THAT THE SUBJECT IS A WAGE EARNER ASK B.
IF THE ABOVE ANSWER DOES NOT IMPLY WAGE EARNER (i.e. housewife) ASK D.

B. Are there any other people who work and contribute to the family income, in the household?

INTERVIEWER: WE ARE MOST INTERESTED IN MAJOR WAGE EARNERS.

1. ( ) Yes
2. ( ) No ⎤
3. ( ) No answer ⎦ (SKIP TO QUES. 60)

C. What kind of work does he/she normally do?

____

D. What work does the person who contributes most to the household earning normally do?

____

INTERVIEWER: ASK ONLY IF RESPONSE TO 'A' IS "RETIRED".

E. What kind of work did you do before you were retired?

____

---

60. What was the last grade you completed in school?

________ INTERVIEWER: CODE NUMBER OF YEARS OR

95 ( ) No answer

96 ( ) Other

97 ( ) Community college certificates and other certificates

98 ( ) Professional or graduate degree (engineering, law, MD., M.A., Ph.D.)

99 ( ) B.A./B.Sc.

61. What is the intersection nearest to your home?

____

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO WRITE IN ST., AVE., CRES. ETC.
IF YOU CANNOT GET THIS INFORMATION, TRY TO GET THE NAME OF A NEIGHBORHOOD. YOU MAY GIVE EXAMPLES.

---

62. What is your year of birth?

______ year

---

63. Could you tell me how long you have lived in (name city) ?

____________ INTERVIEWER: CODE NUMBER OF YEARS

00 - less than 1 year

---

64. What is your present marital status?

1. ( ) Married
2. ( ) Widow or widower
3. ( ) Divorced
4. ( ) Separated
5. ( ) Common law
6. ( ) Single
7. ( ) Other (specify ________________________)
8. ( ) No answer

Sex of respondent:

1. ( ) Male
2. ( ) Female

Thank you very much for your co-operation. I know that your answers will be useful in attempting to prevent crime in the future.

INTERVIEWER: STOP HERE

Income area

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY DATA RELATING TO VARIABLES EMPLOYED IN THE ANALYSIS

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD	Range
Perceptions of Crime			
1. chance of serious crime (neighbourhood)	1.74	.59	1-4
2. how likely someone attacked	1.89	.31	1-2
3. chance of serious crime (city)	2.15	.76	1-4
4. chance of break and enter	1.27	.45	1-2
5. chance of assault	1.35	.48	1-2
6. safe alone at night	2.05	.94	1-4
7. concerned break and enter	1.21	.41	1-2
8. concerned assault	1.47	.50	1-2
9. concern index	1.56	.75	1-3
Primary Status Characteristics			
1. Sex	1.60	.49	1-2
2. Age	1.12	.32	1-2
3. Socioeconomic Status	45.73	14.82	9-78
Secondary Status Characteristics			
1. newspapers	4.62	2.72	1-12
2. television	2.53	1.92	0-12
3. television news	1.22	.41	1-2
4. victimization	1.79	.41	1-2
5. long at address	6.45	8.28	1-91
6. long in city	14.90	15.64	1-91
7. social problems-old moral standards	1.23	.42	1-2
8. city is growing	2.06	.76	1-4
Consequences of Perception			
1. index of defensive measures	.95	1.06	0-5
2. wanted to go somewhere	.96	.30	1-2
3. faith in fellow man	1.64	.48	1-2
4. people in neighbourhood trusted	1.09	.29	1-2
5. like to move to another neighbourhood	1.61	.49	1-2
6. are neighbours friendly or unfriendly	1.18	.38	1-2
7. like living in city	1.09	.29	1-2
8. good place to raise children	1.17	.38	1-2